

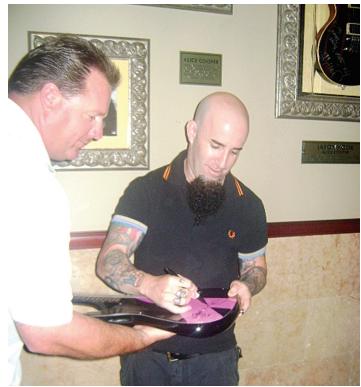
On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.com Website: www.arubatoday.com Thursday, October 8, 2009



**Price of a barrel
of petroleum**
US\$ 69.57
↓1.31

Pinktober at Hard Rock Café Aruba



Musician, songwriter Scott Ian of Anthrax is pictured signing a pink guitar at Hard Rock Café to support the fight against breast cancer.

PALM BEACH - Hard Rock raises the bar in the fight to end breast cancer by bringing you products whose proceeds benefit BCRF (The Breast Cancer Research Foundation). BCRF provides critical funding for innovative clinical and translational breast cancer research at leading medical centers worldwide.

Hard Rock is proud to be a contributing partner for 10 consecutive years. HARD ROCK CAFÉ ARUBA, as part of the Hard Rock Family, will also help to this cause by selling some of the items to help raise the awareness. Now available are the Limited Edition PINKTOBER 09 pin, Limited Edition Keychain, Limited Pinktober Ladies T-shirts, Hard Rock Café Aruba has also introduced some special drinks to help the cause.

Musician, songwriter Scott Ian of Anthrax is pictured signing a pink guitar at Hard Rock Café. The Hard Rock Café invites Aruba Music Festival musicians to join in the fight against breast cancer and sign a guitar! □



Marriott's Aruba's Surf Club AND ARUBA TOURISM AUTHORITY take ARUBA'S "90,000 friends" message is on the road

ORANJESTAD - Aruba's latest travel campaign which invites guests to enjoy its perfect beaches and 90,000 friends they haven't met yet will now be broadcast around the entire island on a unique Arubus public transportation bus. Sponsored by Marriott's Aruba Surf Club and the Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA) the "90,000 friends" message will feature images of the Aruban community and will proudly welcome guests to enjoy the island's warm hospitality.

"The introduction of the '90,000 friends' campaign on the bus is a great way to spread Aruba's welcoming message and in two ways," said Bettina Gonzalez, project director of sales and marketing for Marriott Vacation Club in Aruba. "Not only does it recognize the community for making Aruba such a special place, but it also communicates to visitors that we are thrilled to have them as our guests." The "90,000 friends" bus is one of nine buses that Marriott Vacation Club utilizes in its on-island advertising campaign. While the majority of these buses are used to specifically promote Marriott's Aruba Surf Club and Marriott's Aruba Ocean Club, the "90,000 friends" bus seeks to serve



as a public service message strongly supported by the ATA. The incorporation of this campaign on the Arubus vehicle was accomplished with the assistance of Angel Osorio of Art & Design. "ATA is pleased to partner with Marriott Vacation Club in Aruba on the '90,000 friends' campaign," said Myrna Jansen, ATA director. "We are especially pleased with the timing of this launch as Aruba will welcome meeting planners from around the world for the Society of Incentive & Travel Executives [SITE] conference at the end of October." The "90,000 friends" Arubus is

currently on the road, and will remain circulating throughout the island for an entire year. Marriott Vacation Club is the recognized worldwide leader in vacation ownership with a program highly regarded for its quality and unique flexibility. Celebrating 25 years of providing unforgettable vacations, Marriott became the first branded hospitality company by nearly a decade to enter the timeshare industry in 1984. Marriott Vacation Club continues to expand with a diverse portfolio of more than 11,000 timeshare resort villas

throughout the U.S., Caribbean, Europe and Asia. Today, more than 395,000 Owner families around the globe own their vacations "the Marriott way," offering options to exchange weeks with priority within the Marriott Vacation Club portfolio or within Interval International's global system of more than 2,400 resorts in over 75 countries, trade their week(s) for Marriott Rewards points, or rent their week(s). For more information, please visit www.marriott-vacations.com. For nightly rentals, please visit www.marriott.com. □



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PALM BEACH – The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

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The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but **Texas de Brazil**'s version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalo mozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar. Of course, for those looking to splurge while on vacation, **Texas de Brazil** will gladly serve their garlic mashed potatoes, traditional fried plantains, and their world-famous parmesan cheese bread as part of the meal.

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Fodor's Travel Guide



475 Poker Players Compete for \$2.3 Million Prize Pool in UltimateBet's Aruba Poker Classic

\$753,330 to Go to First Place Winner in 8th Annual Signature Island Event for Online Poker Room



PALM BEACH-AtTheCasino at the Radisson UltimateBet announced the final prize pool for the 2009 Aruba Poker Classic Main Event. With buy-ins being accepted up until early afternoon on Tuesday, last-minute travelers made their way to the island and bumped the prize pool up to an impressive \$2,303,750. A total of 475 players have begun fighting their way to the first place prize of \$753,330, the championship title, and bragging rights as UltimateBet's ultimate warrior.

Heading into Day 2 on Wednesday afternoon, 263 players remain including Phil Hellmuth who takes a seat

in 28th place with 49,175 in chips.

October 9th, 2009.

Live updates on the Aruba Poker Classic, including details on how members of Team UB are doing in the tournament, can be found on UltimateBet's blog at UltimateBet.com.

About UltimateBet

Designed with the assistance of the best poker players in the world -- Phil Hellmuth and Annie Duke -- UltimateBet provides the best poker games available on the net through the CEREUS poker network.

Players can download the free poker software, play in free ring games and tournaments and get tips from the pros to learn the sport or to enhance their playing strategy. □



Salamander Holdings & Aruba's Retail Experts hosted

Poker Widows for a Shopping Activity



PALM BEACH -- An intimate group of Ultimate Bet's Poker Widows, wives and girlfriends of the players participating in the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa international poker tournament were invited for a shopping activity by Salamander Holdings. The activity included a

complimentary shopping tour on Palm Beach over wine and hors d'oeuvres which were served along the way. The ladies explored Aruba's most intriguing retail stores located within the high rise hotel area, enjoying the abundance of merchandise available for their viewing



and shopping pleasure! The tour started at the Coconut Trading Co which offers a variety of unique Gifts for all ages at the Village Mall across the street from the Radisson, and continued to the Lazy Lizard located at South Beach Centre next door to Hard Rock Café, offering resort wear and beach accessories. Having imbibed a few interesting wines and tasted some absolutely delicious premium Dutch cheeses, the ladies continued to the Playa Linda Beach Resort, home of T.H. Palm & Company, showcasing a variety of imaginative merchandise for



Fun Island Living in a truly creative ambiance.

Die-hard shoppers in the group then continued to the Juggling Fish on the boardwalk and to the bathing suit store, to stock up on distinctive beach and swimwear as well as unusual souvenirs. During this fun and relaxing shopping tour the group also helped benefit our community as a percent of all their purchases was donated by the stores to local charities under the Tikkun Olam, world repair program – helping the community remain strong, now in its second year! □



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★★★★★ "A must-read, no-holds-barred look at Aruba." — LAGO-COLONY.com

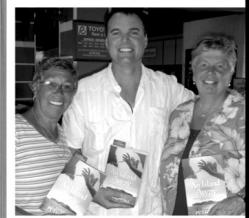
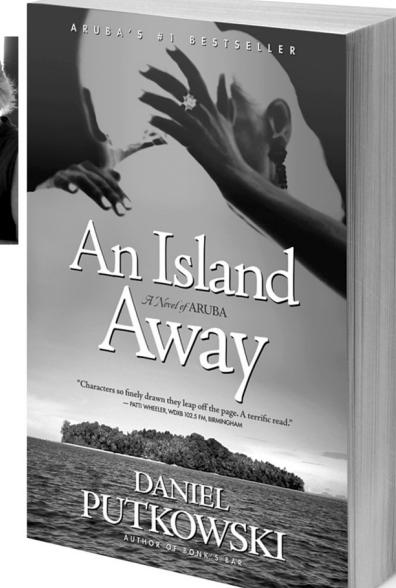
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De Wit & VanDorp - Queen Beatrix Airport
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VanDorp Gifts - Holiday Inn SunSpree
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VanDorp Gifts - Paradise Beach Villas
VanDorp Gifts - Manchebo
De Wit & VanDorp - Certified MegaMall
De Wit & VanDorp - Dakota
De Wit & VanDorp - Oranjestad
Aruba Post - San Nicolas
Antraco Bazaar - Casa Del Mar

Ocean Drive - Aruba Marriott Resort
Island Life - Marriott Ocean Club
Red Sail Sports - Hyatt Regency Resort
Tropical Breeze - Radisson Resort
Tradewinds - Westin Resort
Tropical Market - Marriott Ocean Club
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Lots of Aruban participation at 42nd edition of Bonaire Regatta



BONIARE - With 17 microboat captains from Aruba in the majority and two yachts part of the Cruising Class, the island of Aruba is well represented at the 42nd edition of the International Bonaire Sailing Regatta, which went underway last Monday morning. The microboaters have had a full day of racing on Tuesday, with lots more to come in the next few days. For the yachts the Eva Luna

and the Tranquilo the trip to Bonaire proved most eventful: the Eva Luna took 48 hours, with lots of currents and waves keeping her in sight of Aruba for 6 hours straight, while the Tranquilo survived a fire incident.

With Curacao in sight, captain Anthony Hagedoorn of the Tranquilo was rudely shaken wide awake when his engine caught fire through



overheating due to short circuiting. Although the fire was put out quickly and the trip to Bonaire was without any further mishaps, the incident has its repercussions, as the Tranquilo has to be towed into the marina after racing. That is why the ship did not sail in the first two races on Monday. On Tuesday, however, she performed outstandingly in the Lac Bay Race. Not a first place, maybe, but in any case second: that all depends on the rating.

The Round Bonaire Race and the Lac Bay Race saw some spectacular shattering of records: the fastest ever in all categories. The start was relatively calm, with a 15-knot wind propelling the boats smoothly over the starting line, but further along the route, the gusts of wind provided some wonderful and

exciting moments on board.

The forecast for the coming days looks great: lots of wind to enjoy. On Friday evening the awards ceremony is held for the yachts and small vessels. The microboats have their own prize giving ceremony on Saturday.

The Bonaire Regatta is not

only about sailing: there is a festival with lots of music, cultural events and dancing in the evenings, plus the island is focussing on sports this week: swimming, soccer, volleyball, running and even a 'vierdaagse': a four-day walking tour. The flamingo island is buzzing with activities and it is a lot of fun to be here. □



*** Human Hints Daily ***

Recognize Your Self

In society today, we take words for granted. Unless we're in advertising, write political speeches or practice law, we don't realize the hidden power in words. Upon inspection, however, some words act as unconscious triggers to deeper understanding. When we examine a word, we attempt to unlock what the word represents.

The word 'recognize' is meant to trigger awareness. Let's see what hidden meaning we can uncover. To cognize is to become aware. To re-cognize is to become aware again. We recognize people we have cognized before. When we

recognize, we give relevance, we confirm.

It is said that the only time people in a relationship recognize each other is when they fight.

People will pick fights with their partner, just to get their attention. When your partner gives you attention, they recognize you.

Their recognition of you confirms your importance in their lives. Recognition is confirmation. Arguing gives us external validation that we make a difference. When we argue, we use others to help us believe that we matter.

We all want to be recognized for who we are, and most of our lives are spent seeking external validation of ourselves. We are beginning to realize that we will never find completion in an external illusion. True recognition is not in remembering something separate from you, it is remembering your Self. When you recognize your self, you provide true validation of your importance.

Great theory, but what the heck does it mean to recognize yourself? Throughout life, we become increasingly clear about our desires, strengths, weaknesses, and other aspects

of our three dimensional expression. Humanity.

Until Tomorrow...

Go to www.HumanHints.com to sign up to receive this column in your email each day.

~Quentin Danziger

Quentin has over 20 years experience balancing what we refer to as the Real World, with science and spirit. He has held positions of responsibility and authority, received a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics from Colorado School of Mines, and has also studied many avenues of alternative thought.

HumanHints is the culmination of his knowledge, experience and practice. These free daily emails detail concrete, real-world techniques to consciously create any future you choose, while in the throes of daily life created by outdated modes of thought.

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EAGLE BEACH - Oasis Luxury Condominiums is a Mediterranean-style designed complex located on the prestigious Eagle Beach right next to Chalet Suisse consisting of a total of 35 units dis-

35 EXCLUSIVE OCEAN VIEW UNITS
STARTING IN THE LOW 400'S

tributed on five (5) floors. The one, two and three bedroom suites have a perfect view of the ocean and beach. The units include, among other amenities, floor to ceiling glass doors and panoramic windows, spacious terraces, marble bathrooms, European kitchens

with granite counter tops and a full stainless steel appliance package including washer and dryer. This 35-condominium complex will feature a beautiful swimming pool with a beach style entry with waterfalls and fountain and state of the art fiber optic lighting. The entrance of the building has a drive-up covered entrance and an elegant two-story lobby leading to the sun-filled hallways and corridors. The common area will facilitate the owners with a well-equipped gym overlooking the gardens and the pool.

The garden will feel like an oasis true to the projects name. There will also be a recreation room and sofas throughout the common area to lounge and relax. Further amenities include a 24/7 security, a full concierge and a rental program for the owners who want to earn a return on their investment. The concierge service will be helpful to assist the owners in making their 'homecoming' a very pleasant return. Each condo will have one designated parking space exclusive to the owners. Construction on Oasis at Eagle

Beach is moving fast. Fifteen of the thirty five units have already been sold. The condominiums will be ready for occupancy by March 2010. Oasis is located on Eagle Beach which allows for an easy access, even on foot, to the best casinos, restaurants, golf courses, shopping areas and night life the Aruba has to offer. The experienced sales team of Oasis invites you for a visit to learn about this new gem on the beach.

The site tour will take you up in the complex where you will enjoy spectacular views of the ocean and beach as well as a wonderfull view of Oranjestad where the cruise ships are docked. The views from the rooftop terrace are stunning to say the least. The Oasis sales team is ready to assist you.

COME VISIT US FOR
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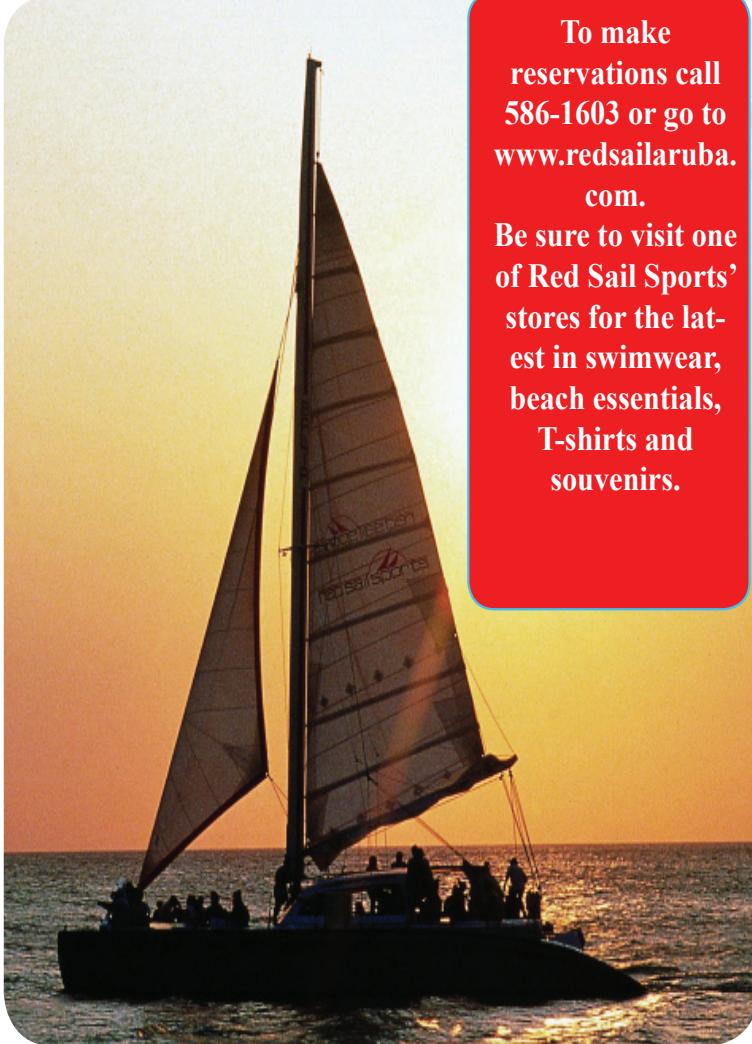
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This vibrant unforgettable sail provides a casual Mexican Buffet Dinner and a complimentary bar featuring Coronita beer, Margaritas, and Tequilas. Watch the sun set, the colors of the sky change and the island slowly light up. This is the perfect sail to celebrate the end of a Caribbean day and the start of a fun filled Caribbean night.



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red sail sports.

Aruba is hot for Earth, Wind and Fire



ORANJESTAD - The Aruba Tourism Authority announced that the legendary band Earth, Wind & Fire will perform at the 8th Annual Aruba Music Festival to be held October 9 & 10. Earth, Wind & Fire is simply one of the most important, innovative, and celebrated contemporary Pop/R&B music forces of the 20th century. The band has had a remarkable career spanning over four decades with accolades, awards and record-breaking achievements. Earth, Wind & Fire's signature sound is not easily categorized and since its inception has been profoundly influential...musically, socially, and spiritually.

The musical vision has fused Pop, R&B, Rock, Latin, Funk, Jazz, and African

Music into one unique sound. Successfully breaking all musical genre boundaries with 23 albums, Earth, Wind & Fire have recorded eight #1 R&B singles and eight Double Platinum Top 10 Pop Albums over their career.

Earth, Wind & Fire have received 20 Grammy Award nominations and have won six awards as a group; additionally its founding members individually (Maurice White & Philip Bailey) have each won two, totaling eight Grammy Awards. In 2004, Earth, Wind & Fire received the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (N.A.R.A.S.) Signature Governor's Award. They have earned more than 50 Gold and Platinum albums and have sold over 90 million albums worldwide earning

them a place on the list of best selling music artists of all time. VH1 ranked Earth, Wind & Fire number 60 on their list of the 100 Greatest Artists of Rock & Roll. Rolling Stone Magazine declared the group "changed the sound of black pop." President Obama invited Earth, Wind & Fire to perform in the East Room at the White House for the first social event of the new administration. Earth, Wind & Fire made international news when President Obama declared in an interview with Rolling Stone Magazine that the group was among his favorites. He said they are "rhythm and blues and pop staples for me."

Earth, Wind & Fire's career achievements have been acknowledged and earned them their place in musical history. Earth, Wind & Fire have been inducted into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (2000); they have received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame (1995) and Hollywood's Rockwalk (2003). That same year they received the Vocal Group Hall of Fame Award (2003). The music industry and fans have bestowed Lifetime Achievement honors from ASCAP (Rhythm & Soul Heritage Award - 2002), NAACP (Hall of Fame - 1994) and the BET Awards (Life Time Achievement Award 2002). Two Earth, Wind & Fire classic songs have been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame: "That's The Way of The World" (2004) and "Shining Star" (2007). Earth, Wind & Fire have 12 American Music Awards nominations and four awards and the group received the Entertainer Award at the 2009 TV Land Awards.

Earth, Wind & Fire are the first African-American performers to sell out Madison Square Garden and to receive the MSG Gold Ticket Award. Earth, Wind & Fire is the first African-American group to receive the Columbia Records Crystal Globe Award for selling the most albums internationally.

The principals of Earth, Wind

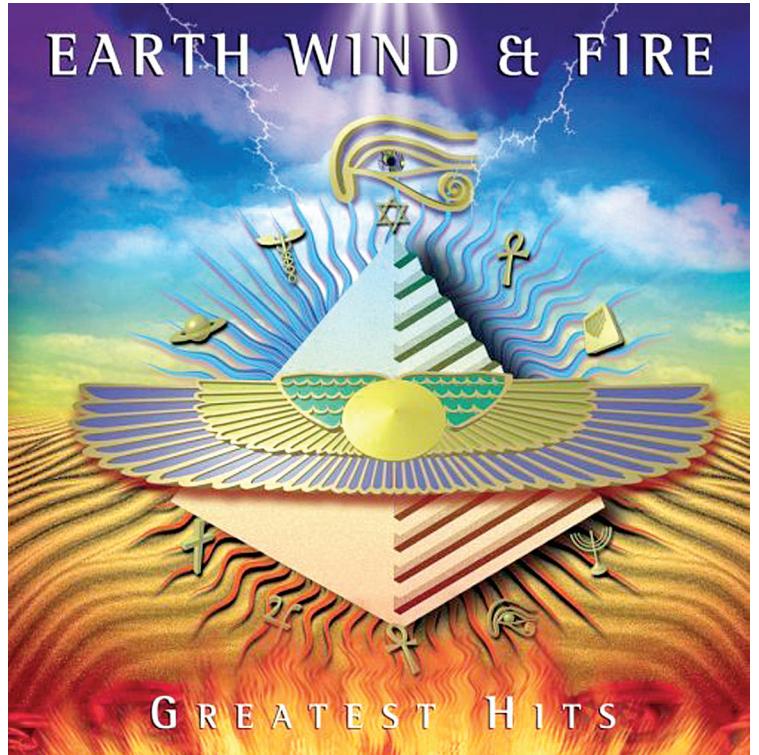


& Fire: Philip Bailey, Verdine White, and Ralph Johnson have received honorary doctorate degrees from the Arts & Media College at Columbia College in Chicago. Co-Founders Philip Bailey and Maurice White have earned honorary doctorate degrees at Berklee College of Music.

The group's Grammy Awards have exemplified Earth, Wind & Fire's relevance and the connection with contemporary R&B and Pop artists by showcasing the group twice in the 2005 and 2007 television event. The musical highlight at the 2005 broadcast was Earth, Wind & Fire joining forces with Outkast, in what was the Hip Hop group's last television appearance together. In 2007, Earth, Wind & Fire performed on the Grammys with the top nominees Ludacris and Mary

J. Blige in a heartfelt poignant message to raise the social consciousness of teenage runaways.

Many of today's contemporary Grammy Award winning music artists have named Earth, Wind & Fire as their musical influence or have announced that they are die hard fans, including: Beyoncé, Usher and Prince (he thanked Earth, Wind & Fire in his induction acceptance speech at the British Hall of Fame). Alicia Keys proclaims that Earth, Wind & Fire is "the best band ever." Mary J. Blige has shown her appreciation to the band by re-recording one of the bands hit songs "Imagination." Miles Davis described Earth, Wind & Fire as his "all time favorite band" saying "they have everything (horns, electric guitar, singers, and more) in one band"



Quincy Jones has proclaimed himself to be the "biggest fan of Earth, Wind & Fire since day one."

The Black Eyed Peas took the stage with Earth, Wind & Fire for a performance at the Super Bowl XXIX, and then an encore by opening the 57th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards together.

Earth, Wind & Fire's songs have been covered by recording artists Jerry Garcia Band, Point of Grace, D'Angelo, Lenny White, Patti LaBelle, The Manhattans, Wynonna Judd, Yoland Adams, Incognito, Chaka Khan, Dionne Warwick, the Vienna Boys choir, Herb Albert, Musiq and Tito Puente.

Their songs have also been sampled by numerous artists some of which include: A Tribe Called Quest, Wyclef Jean, Jay-Z, Amerie, The Fugees, LL Cool J, De La Soul, Common, Quenn Pen, Naughty by Nature, P. Diddy, The Roots, Will Smith, Cee-Lo, Mc Lyte and Lisa Left Eye Lopes.

Music artist who name Earth, Wind & Fire as a major influence or inspiration include Usher, wil i am, Mary J Blige, Cherish, Prince, Pharrell Williams, The Neptunes, Jon Secada, Wyclef Jean, Common, Phil Collins, Boney James, Angie Stone, The All American Rejects, Jesse McCartney, Mint Condition, Solange, Babyface, Outkast, Jamiroquai, Marcus Miller, Omarion, Eric Benet, Sheila E., Erykah Badu, Jamie Foxx, Fall Out Boy, Meshell Ndegeocello, Wynton Marsalis, and Mario.

In keeping with the group's spiritual legacy the very principals of which the group was founded and derived its name from, Earth, Wind & Fire has stood for and profoundly believes in the circle of returning the benefits of success by giving back through supporting the continuation of raising funds and the consciousness of important social issues.

The Inaugural 2005 Grammy Jam charity event honored Earth, Wind & Fire. The benefit event that was supported by Stevie Wonder, wiliam, Indie Arie, Usher and Kanye West performing classic Earth,

Wind & Fire hit songs. Fans in the audience, including Prince, were mesmerized. Proceeds from the evening went to many non-profit organizations: The GRAMMY Foundation, California State Summer School for the Arts, the Los Angeles Chapter Scholarship Program, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), and For The Arts. The group's founders have instituted charitable programs that have a direct endowment to local and national music and

arts initiatives. Philip Bailey started the organization called Music is Unity Foundation and Verdine White introduced Wright Life Arts Center for the Youth. Earth, Wind & Fire appeared and performed on the first American Idol Gives back special. The program raised money and awareness with the effect of poverty on children and young people in the US and Africa.

Earth, Wind, & Fire remains to this day a top musical phenomenon with a catalog of



mega-hits spanning over forty years. Their influences have changed the course of music and perhaps the spiritual conciseness around the world □

ARUBA 2009 MUSIC FESTIVAL

Paulina Rubio

OCTOBER 9

Fonseca

EARTH, WIND & FIRE

OCTOBER 10

Aruba Entertainment Center

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From the islands of Norway to Aruba

Hans & Aina tie the knot



BUCUTI- On September 26, 2009 Aina Stobakk & Hans Karlsen said I do at sunset. The two lovebirds are from neighboring islands off the West Coast of Norway. Aina is a social worker and Hans a deck foreman/ crane operator onboard an offshore vessel; They have known each other for many years as friends and throughout their friendship a

bond of love was created. It was not until Aina received a dozen of red roses which asked her to join him for a weekend trip to Svalbard that they became a couple. On December 18, 2009, after four weeks away for work, Hans proposed his love and surprised Aina with a vacation that afternoon to Riga, Latvia to celebrate their engagement.

The wedding plans started very quickly, they both dreamed of a Caribbean beach wedding and knew Aruba was the perfect spot. Aina searched the internet and fell in love with Bucuti as their romantic wedding-moon.

Hans & Aina were officially married at Aruba's Historical Town Hall in the afternoon hours of September 26, 2009. The beach blessing took place at Bucuti with toes in the sand and a breathtaking nautical view of the Caribbean ocean. The ceremony was delivered by Reverend Robert Gibson who surprised the couple by asking them to say some words from the heart. Aina & Hans vowed their love as one, exchanged rings, cut wedding cake and toasted to champagne. Bella Aruba Photography captured the



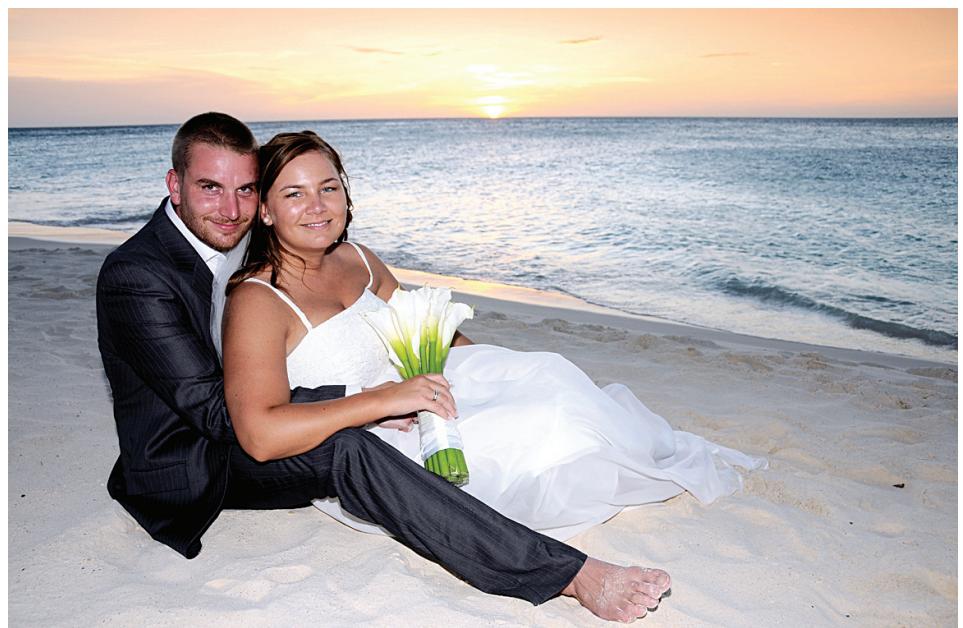
moments as their special day unfolded with spectacular sunset.

Their dinner was a few feet away at the Pirates Nest under a palapa as they sipped champagne and enjoyed their special occasion.

"We want to thank the

Bucuti staff for treating us so wonderful and making us feel at home and our coordinator Nasnette Wouters who created our vision. Our wedding was everything we ever dreamed of." stated the newlyweds. □

Photos by Angela Munzenhofer



Bonaire referendum no reason to slow down, says Bijleveld



THE HAGUE--Developments in Bonaire are no reason for Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten to slow down the constitutional process, but Bonaire's choices cannot be seen in isolation from those of the other four islands.

Bijleveld-Schouten stated this in a letter that she sent to the Dutch Parliament's Second Chamber on Monday. "Of course Bonaire is free to organise a referendum, but I am also of the opinion that there should be a consistent policy," she stated.

The State Secretary explained

that a package of agreements that were linked to each other had been made in the transition period. "If the basis of the agreements that were made is put up for discussion, namely Bonaire becoming a public entity of the Netherlands, then the entire package is put up for discussion."

According to Bijleveld-Schouten, subjecting the whole package to review is not in the interest of the people of Bonaire, who have waiting a long time and can now expect concrete improvement in government services. "In my view, it is in the people's interest and in agreement with the earlier understandings to continue on the path that we are following," she said.

"In my opinion, Bonaire's choices cannot be viewed isolated from those of the other four islands. The agreements with the other islands can only be realised within the foreseeable future if we continue on the path that we are on now," she stated.

In preparation for the Political Steering Group meeting in Curaçao on September 30, Bijleveld-Schouten spoke to representatives of Saba and St. Eustatius. "In those talks, they indicated having great concerns about the Bonaire referendum. They urged me to continue the process with the same drive. I have informed them that a delay of the trajectory is not an option for me, and that the handling of legislation to prepare public entity status for Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius will continue its planning."

The State Secretary said she considered it "unacceptable" to hold off on the handling of the draft Kingdom Law to amend the Charter until after the referendum, as Bonaire's Executive Council had requested in its letter of September 24. She added she had made her feelings on this matter clear to Bonaire's government when she had visited the island on Monday, September 28.

In her six-page letter to Dutch Parliament, Bijleveld-Schouten also tackled several other issues in connection with her visit to Bonaire and Curaçao last week. She referred to her meeting with Antillean Justice Minister Magali Jacoba, the Political Steering Group, Curaçao's Isla refinery, the Regional Service Centre (RSC) and the elections in Aruba. The Second Chamber's Permanent Committee on Antillean and Aruban Affairs NAAZ has scheduled a meeting with Bijleveld-Schouten next week Thursday.

In her meeting with Jacoba, the State Secretary expressed her concerns about progress relating to the Joint Police Facility (Gemeenschappelijke Voorziening Politie) and the Education sub-work group, considering the importance of guaranteeing that cross-border crime and organised crime were diligently tackled after the transition.

Minister Jacoba informed the

State Secretary that she had just signed the integral plan of approach relating to the improvement trajectory at Bon Futuro prison in Curaçao. Bijleveld-Schouten informed the Second Chamber that personnel made available by the Netherlands were working at the prison. "Together with their Antillean counter-parts, they will execute the joint integral plan of approach and realise the desired improvements at Bon Futuro," she stated.

Bijleveld-Schouten further announced that a permanent PR person had been appointed at the Regional Service Centre to inform citizens of Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius about the constitutional process. She said she was satisfied with the work being done by RSC, and was convinced that cooperation among the Dutch ministries within the RSC and preparations to realise a smooth transfer of the three islands to the Netherlands were going well. □

No Brooks Tower accord until all islands are ready

~ Says Minister Jacoba ~

P H I L I P S B U R G -- The Antillean Justice Ministry refuses to implement the Brooks Tower Accord immigrant amnesty programme until all five islands have the workers and resources to legalise their undocumented residents.

Antillean Justice Minister Magali Jacoba told reporters St. Maarten, Saba, St. Eustatius, Bonaire and Curaçao would receive the benefits of the Brooks Tower Accord, an agreement to give non-nationals who live under the radar in the Antilles legal status, once they were ready. She expects to meet the Lt. Governors of the islands this week to discuss their progress, but until then she cannot entertain a date for Brooks Tower Accord implementation.

"We want to do it one way on all the islands," Jacoba said Tuesday in a press conference on her second day of meetings in St. Maarten. The more-than-two-year-old Brooks Tower agreement was among Justice matters discussed during the

minister's second official visit to St. Maarten.

The Brooks Tower Accord was signed by the Lt. Governors of the Netherlands Antilles and former Antillean Justice Minister David Dick, Jacoba's predecessor, in 2007. It promises an estimated 20,000 undocumented persons living in St. Maarten, and thousands of others throughout the islands, legal permission to live here. Restrictions on how the non-nationals could apply for legal residence and when were established in the first agreement.

The accord was not the only issue Jacoba discussed during her first two days here.

She and her delegation talked Monday about the Win-Win Agreement (WWA) that ushered in Police Interim Coach Ronald Dongor in May 2008. Dongor and the Windward Islands Police Force KPSSS discussed developments since the agreement was signed last year. Jacoba, with State Secretary of Justice Ernie Simmons translating her

Dutch, said the ministry hadn't decided about the future of the WWA.

In a follow-up to the minister's first visit late August, Jacoba met union leaders again about promotions, pay and other problems affecting police. Simmons said the minister hoped to help several policemen receive promotions, and was looking at the legality of what happened. "As promised, we came back to answer questions that were posed," Simmons said.

More than 40 police sergeants walked off the job, protested in silence outside the Government Administration Building and met with their unions and the minister about their promotions on August 24, the day Jacoba arrived for her first official visit to the Windward Islands.

Jacoba also talked to some local Brooks Tower stakeholders, including Executive Council members, Tuesday about its expected effects on the community. They asked when the agreement to make

foreigners who have been living illegally in the territories legal residents would become policy for the Antilles.

More important than when to implement the accord is how, Jacoba said, explaining that the document needed adaptation to the Antilles two years after it was first made.

"The agreement signed in 2007 will not be implemented as is," she said.

Jacoba and her team have meetings scheduled today and tomorrow with, among others, prison unions about problems that affect workers and inmates at the jail. □



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BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY

Stocks fall after 2-day rally as earnings loom



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew))

By STEPHEN BERNARD
and SARA LEPRO,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK — Investors waiting for earnings reports to start in earnest sent stocks modestly lower Wednesday following a two-day spike. Industrial, material and technology stocks fell sharply, while financial shares rose. With little economic news to shape sentiment, investors are keenly focused on earnings reports for the July-September quarter for more clues about the economy. Aluminum maker Alcoa Inc. will be the first of the 30 companies that make up the Dow Jones industrial average to report results after the closing bell. "Investors are holding tight here," said Eric Ross, director of research at Canaccord Adams. "There are people on both sides of the fence. A lot of people think this market is going to keep running and running and then others that are very nervous."

With the benchmark Standard & Poor's index up 55.9 percent since hitting a 12-year

low in March, investors have been questioning whether a continued advance is justified given recent evidence that the economy's recovery will be rocky.

The S&P 500 index has given up 1.6 percent over the past two weeks as encouraging trends in labor and manufacturing faltered. How the earnings reports fare in coming weeks will largely determine the direction of the market through the end of the year, Ross said.

Many companies beat modest earnings expectations in the second quarter by cutting costs, helping to fuel the market's rally through the summer. Now investors are hoping to see stronger sales driving earnings, which would signal a rebound in consumer spending. Many analysts are skeptical about how strong that spending will be.

"The consumer is just really damaged," said Len Blum, a managing partner at Westwood Capital LLC. "Every time we see a blip, it's not sustainable."

In midafternoon, the Dow Jones industrials fell 34.84, or 0.4 percent, to 9,696.41. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 1.00, or 0.1 percent, to 1,053.72, while the Nasdaq composite index lost 0.33, or 0.02 percent, to 2,103.24. Among the earnings reports trickling in Wednesday, Costco Wholesale Corp. said profits fell 6 percent, partly due to a stronger dollar and increased employee benefit costs, but results still beat analysts' expectations. Shares rose \$1.32, or 2.3 percent, to \$59.25.

Monsanto Co., the world's biggest seed maker, said its loss widened to \$233 million as revenue fell. Adjusted earnings narrowly beat estimates. Shares fell \$1.27 to \$74.09.

Alcoa's shares added 6 cents to \$13.95 ahead of its report. In other trading, shares of Verisk Analytics Inc. shot up 25 percent during their market debut, adding \$5.50 to \$27.50. The insurance data specialist raised \$1.9 billion in one of the year's largest initial public offerings.

Gold continued to edge higher after hitting a new high of \$1,049 an ounce overnight. Prices rose \$3 to \$1,042.

Oil fell \$1.80 to \$69.08 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange after the government reported that crude inventories fell last week. Gasoline supplies grew. A falling dollar and rising commodity prices helped push stocks higher on Tuesday, bringing the Dow's two-day gain to 244 points, its best back-to-back advance since July. The resurgence came after two straight weekly declines, also for the first time since July.

Investors have been keeping a close eye on the dollar, which has fallen steadily this year amid rock-bottom interest

rates and massive government spending. A weak dollar is good for corporate profits of companies with a strong global footprint, as it encourages overseas companies to buy U.S. goods and services. Over the long term, however, a weak dollar could trigger inflation. The dollar rebounded slightly Wednesday against the euro and the British pound after tumbling the day before on a surprise interest rate increase in Australia. Higher interest

rates can boost a country's currency.

Bond prices rose after an auction of 10-year notes attracted strong demand. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 3.19 percent from 3.26 percent late Tuesday. About four stocks fell for every three that rose on the New York Stock Exchange, where volume came to 594.2 million shares compared with 672.4 million at the same time on Tuesday. □



Fannie Mae

A woman takes a brochure detailing how homeowners can make their mortgage payments more affordable at the Fannie Mae booth set up at the Housing Rescue Fair, part of the National Urban League's Economic Empowerment Tour, in Dallas, Texas June 13, 2009.

REUTERS/Jessica Rinaldi

Fannie, Freddie plan to aid mortgage banks: report

U.S. government-controlled mortgage finance companies Freddie Mac (FRE.N) and Fannie Mae (FNM.N) are working on a program to help independent mortgage banks get access to short-term credit needed to make home loans, the Wall Street Journal said, citing people familiar with the matter. Fannie and Freddie will provide advance commitments for the purchase of home mortgages that meet certain standards, according to the paper.

The program aims to reduce risks that independent mortgage banks face so they can obtain short-term credit, the paper said.

The Journal's sources added that the companies are planning to build on an undisclosed pilot program that Freddie has with Provident Funding Associates LP and warehouse-lender NattyMac, where short-term funding would be provided to mortgage companies. Spokesmen for Fannie and Freddie declined to discuss details of the plan with the paper.

Fannie and Freddie could not be immediately reached for comment by Reuters outside regular U.S. business hours. □

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Amid the global economic crisis, China rises

By JOE McDONALD,
AP Business Writer

BEIJING — The auto-parts maker Delphi Corp. is headquartered in Troy, Mich., in the heart of the region that made the United States the car capital of the world. It's a place where the phrase "buy American" is right at home. Now the 3,000 employees of Delphi's brake and suspension unit are getting a new boss. Battered by weak sales, Delphi is selling the unit to investors led by a company named Shougang Corp.

Shougang is a steel maker owned by the government of China — a government that calls itself communist but espouses a "socialist market economy" as it marches down globalization's road toward a capitalistic future.

"Everyone's so desperate for cash that the Chinese show up with a checkbook and people say, 'Yes, please,'" says Arthur Kroeber, managing director of Dragonomics, a Beijing research firm.

Explosive growth in China and India, coupled with Japan's clout as the world's No. 2 economy, has long been expected to shift economic power from the United States to Asia as this century progresses. The financial crisis and resulting Great Recession are accelerating that process.

"China certainly comes out of the crisis stronger rather than weaker, and it's the opposite for the United States," says Stephen Roach, chairman of

Morgan Stanley Asia.

Even some Americans have begun declaring this the "Chinese century" since it began nearly a decade ago. But while they and others fear the rise of China in international relations and the global economy, the reality is less dramatic: Beijing is still getting its own sprawling, chaotic house in order and is in no position to supplant the United States as global leader in the near future.

At the same time, Beijing's power remains undefined: On an unfamiliar global stage, it is unsure what role it wants to play.

For decades, China followed the dictum of its late supreme leader, Deng Xiaoping, to keep its head down abroad and focus on development at home. But earlier this decade, emboldened by success and mindful that their globalized economy needs stability, communist leaders started pressing for a place among the nations that manage world affairs.

These days, Beijing is claiming a bigger voice in global economic forums such as the Group of 20 and is getting more deference in the United Nations, which could mean protection for friends such as Iran and Myanmar. Its military spending is the world's second-highest, behind that of the United States.

"China is very likely to be the second-most-powerful country — if it isn't now, then within

a decade," says Kenneth Lieberthal, director of the Brookings Institution's John L. Thornton China Center in Washington.

For the United States, it's a mixed blessing. The American and Chinese economies are intertwined, and the success of one depends on the health of the other.

The United States is China's biggest trade partner. China sent \$338 billion in goods here last year. Beijing is Washington's biggest creditor, with more than \$800 billion invested in government debt. American automakers look to China's growing market to propel future sales.

The financial crisis set back U.S. growth by years and will add trillions to the federal debt over the next decade. But China avoided the worst of the crisis. Its banks are healthy and, with the help of a 4 trillion yuan (\$586 billion) stimulus, this year's economic growth is on track to top 8 percent.

Already, demand from China can affect oil prices, and it is starting to influence what products are available worldwide. Western jobs are tied to Chinese spending, from British auto factories to Australian iron mines. Chinese money is financing development of oil fields from Venezuela to Central Asia.

And China's role as Washington's lender-in-chief is altering the dynamic of the countries' relationship.

At a meeting in London



FILE - In this Aug. 29, 2007 file photo, two models advertise 'Geely Otaka', a car designed in China, during an auto show in Moscow, Russia. The signs read 'Attention! Otaka - 291,500 Rubles (US\$11,300; euro8,300).' (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev, File)

in April, President Barack Obama assured his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao, that Washington would cut its budget deficit — a promise no American leader ever had to make to a Soviet leader.

Washington's three-year-old strategic dialogue with Beijing has long been dominated by U.S. trade grievances. But the latest round in July, overshadowed by America's need for China to keep buying its debt, became a discussion between equals.

China, a major destination for foreign investment, was starting to reverse the flow and invest abroad before the financial crisis. The crisis accelerated that and has led to a flurry of deals. In some cases, Chinese companies have stepped in to save Western jobs — a notion unthinkable a decade ago. □

In Britain, China's Nanjing Automobile Group plans to reopen the Longbridge factory idled by the collapse of MG Rover to make limited-edition MGTF sports cars. And in Sweden, Beijing Automotive is joining a bid to buy Saab from General Motors, while Geely Automobile wants to acquire Ford's Volvo unit.

"It's better to be part of the race than to watch it from the stands," says Paul Akerlund, a union representative at Saab. "We see advantages in gaining access to the Chinese market, which is the fastest-growing auto market in the world."

In diplomacy, China is only starting to stake out positions on a wide array of global issues. It has used its influence in the United Nations to help allies such as Sri Lanka resist Western pressure on human rights. □

Origin of Komodo Dragon Revealed



In this photo taken on April 30, 2009, a Komodo dragon is seen on Komodo Island, Indonesia. Komodo dragons have a fearsome reputation worldwide because their shark-like teeth and poisonous saliva can kill a person within days of a bite.

(AP Photo/Dita Alangkara)

Charles Q. Choi
Dragons may come from the land Down Under.

Scientists now find that the world's largest living lizard species, the Komodo dragon, most likely evolved in Australia and dispersed westward to its current home in Indonesia.

In the past, researchers had suggested the Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*) developed from a smaller ancestor isolated on the Indonesian islands, evolving its large size as a response to lack of competition from other predators or as a specialist hunter of pygmy elephants known as Stegodon.

However, over the past three years, an international team of scientists unearthed numerous fossils from eastern Australia dated from 300,000 years ago to roughly 4 million years ago

that they now know belong to the Komodo dragon.

"When we compared these fossils to the bones of present-day Komodo dragons, they were identical," said researcher Scott Hocknull, a vertebrate paleontologist at the Queensland Museum in Australia.

For the last 4 million years, Australia has been home to the world's largest lizards, including the 16-foot-long giant (5 meters) called Megalania, once the world's largest terrestrial lizard but which died out some 40,000 years ago.

"Now we can say Australia was also the birthplace of the three-meter (10 foot) Komodo dragon," Hocknull said.

The researchers said the ancestor of the Komodo dragon most likely evolved in Australia and spread westward,

reaching the Indonesian island of Flores by 900,000 years ago. Comparisons between fossils and living Komodo dragons on Flores show that the lizard's body size has remained relatively stable since then.

Further support for this notion of dispersal from Australia comes from the island of Timor, located between Australia and Flores. Three fossil specimens from Timor represent a new, as yet unnamed species of giant monitor lizard, which was larger than the Komodo dragon, although smaller than Megalania. More specimens of this new giant lizard are needed before the species can be formally described.

"There are a lot of things we just simply don't know about this part of the world - Indonesia to Australia," Hocknull told LiveScience. "In recent years this region has thrown up remarkable discoveries - a new species of hominid, the 'Lost World' in New Guinea boasting dozens of new species having never met humans, and now an island chain of giant lizards, including the largest of them all, Megalania from Australia. However, they all went extinct, except the Komodo dragon. The big question now is why? The south-east Asian to Australian region is a hot-spot of new and exciting discoveries."

All these huge lizards were once common in Australasia for more than 3.8 million years, having evolved alongside large mammalian carnivores, such as Thylacoleo, the so-called 'marsupial lion.' The Komodo dragon is the last of these giants, but within the last 2,000 years, their populations have diminished severely, most likely due to humans, and they are now vulnerable to extinction, living now on just a few isolated islands in eastern Indonesia, between Java and Australia.

"Understanding the past history of a species is absolutely fundamental to determining its potential trajectory in the future, its responses to climate change, habitat change and extinction events," Hocknull said. □

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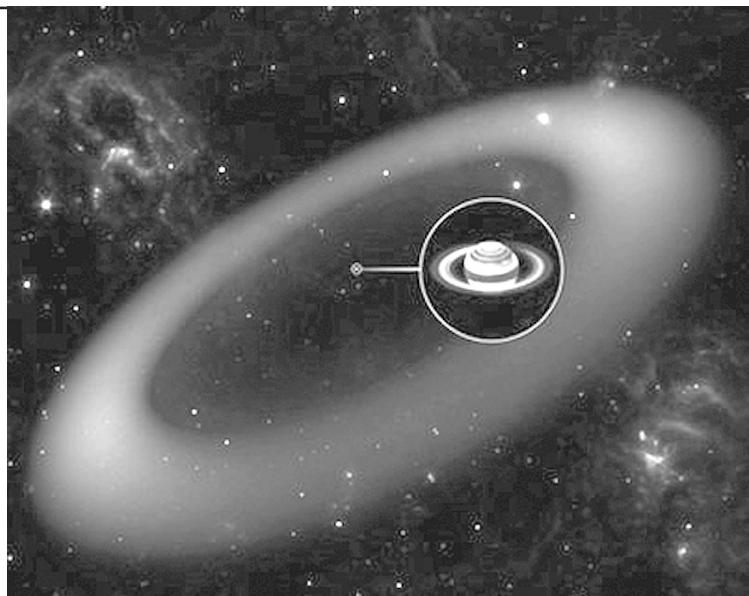
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This artist's rendering released by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory on Tuesday Oct. 6, 2009 shows the biggest but never-before-seen ring around Saturn, spotted by NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope. The inset shows an enlarged image of Saturn, as seen by the W.M. Keck Observatory at Mauna Kea, Hawaii, in infrared light. The bulk of the ring material starts about six million kilometers (3.7 million miles) away from the planet and extends outward roughly another 12 million kilometers (7.4 million miles). The newly found ring is so huge it would take 1 billion Earths to fill it, JPL said.

(AP Photo/Artist's Rendering courtesy NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory)

NASA telescope discovers giant ring around Saturn

PASADENA, Calif. — The Spitzer Space Telescope has discovered the biggest but never-before-seen ring around the planet Saturn, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory announced late Tuesday.

The thin array of ice and dust particles lies at the far reaches of the Saturnian system and its orbit is tilted 27 degrees from the planet's main ring plane, the laboratory said.

JPL spokeswoman Whitney Clavin said the ring is very diffuse and doesn't reflect much visible light but the infrared Spitzer telescope was able to detect it.

Although the ring dust is very cold — minus 316 degrees Fahrenheit — it shines with thermal radiation.

No one had looked at its location with an infrared instrument until now, Clavin said.

The bulk of the ring material starts about 3.7 million miles from the planet and extends outward about another 7.4 million miles.

The newly found ring is so huge it would take 1 billion Earths to fill it, JPL said.

Before the discovery Saturn was known to have seven main rings named A through E and several faint unnamed rings.

A paper on the discovery was to be published online Wednesday by the journal Nature.

"This is one supersized ring," said one of the authors, Anne Verbiscer, an astronomer at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. Her co-authors are Douglas Hamilton of the University of Maryland, College Park, and Michael Skrutskie, also of the University of Virginia.

Saturn's moon Phoebe orbits within the ring and is believed to be the source of the material.

The ring also may answer the riddle of another moon, Iapetus, which has a bright side and a very dark side.

The ring circles in the same direction as Phoebe, while Iapetus, the other rings and most of Saturn's other moons go the opposite way. Scientists think material from the outer ring moves inward and slams into Iapetus.

"Astronomers have long suspected that there is a connection between Saturn's outer moon Phoebe and the dark material on Iapetus," said Hamilton. "This new ring provides convincing evidence of that relationship." □

AP: Anna Nicole Smith investigated in murder plot



FILE - In this Feb. 28, 2006, file photo, Anna Nicole Smith, leaves the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington. Smith was investigated by the FBI in 2000 and 2001 in the alleged plot targeting E. Pierce Marshall. At the time, he was fighting Smith to keep her from collecting his late father's vast oil fortune. The younger Marshall has since died.

(AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta, File)

**By MATT SEDENSKY,
Associated Press Writer**

MIAMI—The FBI investigated whether Anna Nicole Smith plotted to kill her tycoon husband's son as they battled for his father's fortune, newly released files show, but the former Playboy Playmate who died in 2007 was never prosecuted.

Smith's FBI records, obtained exclusively by The Associated Press, say the agency investigated Smith in 2000 and 2001 in a murder-for-hire plot targeting E. Pierce Marshall, who was at the center of a long legal fight to keep the starlet, model and one-time stripper from collecting his father's oil wealth, valued in the hundreds of millions. The younger Marshall died three years ago of natural causes.

The documents released under the Freedom of Information Act depict an investigation going on as the fight raged over J. Howard Marshall II's estate. Vast sections of the 100 pages of released materials—a fraction of Smith's full FBI file—are whited out, and no evidence of her involvement in such a plot is detailed.

There is no indication how authorities became aware of any alleged scheme, but

agents interviewed Smith on July 3, 2000. Told why she was being questioned, "Smith began crying and denied ever making such plans," a report said.

Smith told agents that killing Pierce Marshall would not have made sense because her ex-husband's money would still be tied up in a trust, and because she believed the court battle over the fortune was nearly over, the report states. She told agents she believed the story about the plot was made up by a former lover angry that she broke off their relationship, according to the files.

"Smith adamantly denied ever contemplating such a crime," an agent wrote, and prosecutors eventually agreed the case could not go forward. An April 26, 2001 letter to the FBI from Sally Meloch, an assistant U.S. attorney, said she reviewed the reports but "determined that there is insufficient evidence to establish that there was a murder-for-hire plot by Ms. Smith to kill Pierce Marshall."

Reached at her Los Angeles office on Tuesday, Meloch didn't recall the case, but said, "Any investigations

that we didn't proceed with, we couldn't comment on anyway."

Ron Rale, Smith's personal attorney during her life and the executor of her estate, said whatever allegations were made were absolutely false: "Unequivocally, there was never a murder-for-hire plot that Anna was involved in. Absolutely false. Never happened. End of story."

An attorney for the Marshall estate, including for the younger Marshall's widow, said he couldn't comment. A spokesman for the family, David Margulies, said the family was aware of the FBI investigation but didn't wish to comment further.

But Rusty Hardin, a Houston attorney and longtime Marshall family friend, laughed upon hearing of the alleged plot.

"I don't think I ever saw any

credible evidence," he said. "I do not remember ever being concerned about whether she was trying to have him killed."

Smith was 26 when she wed the 89-year-old Marshall, owner of Great Northern Oil Co., whose wealth was estimated by Forbes to be \$550 million in 1992. They met while she was a topless dancer at a Texas strip club.

He died of natural causes in 1995, little more than a year after they wed. His son died in 2006 at age 67 of an infection and Smith died of a drug overdose a year later at age 39 after collapsing in her South Florida hotel room.

The FBI files show a .357-caliber Smith and Wesson revolver was confiscated from Smith's home, along with a 3 1/2-inch stainless steel knife and, for reasons that were

not explained, a black-and-orange hat described as "Dr. Seuss." All three objects were returned to her about seven months later.

The dispute between Smith and the Marshall estate has bounced around courts for years.

The Supreme Court ruled unanimously in 2006 that Smith could pursue her late husband's fortune. The money became a factor after Smith's death, too, with Stern, her mother, and another boyfriend all fighting over an estate that ultimately will go to her daughter, who is now 3.

Smith's lawyer and companion Howard K. Stern and two doctors, Dr. Sandeep Kapoor and Dr. Khristine Eroshevich, are charged in California with helping the model obtain drugs that ultimately killed her. All have pleaded not guilty. □

Letterman threw spitballs from his own glass house

**By FRAZIER MOORE,
AP Television Writer**

NEW YORK — Some of the politicians zinged by David Letterman over the years for their indiscretions are offering pity and advice for the scandalized talk show host. South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford says Letterman could benefit from his confession that he had affairs with women who worked on the "Late Show." And former Florida Rep. Mark Foley says, "I feel sorry for Dave — I take no glee."

Most of Letterman's targets who were approached by The Associated Press refrained from jeering at his plight—or saying anything at all.

But Sanford sent Letterman warm wishes. "Both my thoughts and my prayers are with him," he said Tuesday after a speaking engagement at a Rotary Club meeting in Easley, S.C. In June, Sanford seemed fair game for comedy after he disappeared from the state (and his wife) for a five-day rendezvous with an Argentine woman he called his soul mate. The governor

"didn't really enjoy this year's Fourth of July. He left his favorite firecracker in Argentina," Letterman joked soon after. "There's a



This image rendered from video shows David Letterman on the 'Late Show' Monday Oct. 5, 2009 days after revealing on air that he'd been sexually involved with women from his television program. During the show Letterman apologized to his wife and to his staff.

(AP Photo/CBS)

lot more introspection and soul-searching on the way down than there is on the way up," said Sanford, who is under investigation by South Carolina's Ethics Commission, in addressing his woes as well as Letterman's. "He can be a better person for it."

Letterman, like many comedians, feasted on the disgrace of Foley, whose political career was ruined in 2006 by a scandal involving salacious e-mails he sent to underage teens.

"How about that Florida Congressman Mark Foley?"

cracked Letterman at the time. "Whoa! At least the Democrats wait until the interns are 18." On Tuesday, Foley, now a talk-radio host in Florida, voiced concern for Letterman's 5-year-old son, Harry, and for the child's mother, Regina Lasko, whom Letterman married in March after many years together.

"You hope that somewhere along the way," continued Foley, "somebody feels their heart beat and says, 'God, but for the grace of God, there go I,' and they say, 'You, know, this isn't funny anymore.' □

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On Top Of The News

Email: arubatoday@gmail.com

Thursday, October 8, 2009



In this Sept. 29, 2009 file photo, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, of Nev., right, speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., left, and newly-named Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, center, listen. With the Senate Finance Committee on the verge of approving a sweeping health overhaul bill Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2009, the path might appear open for action by the full Senate. But Reid has a tough task ahead in finalizing the health care bill.

Associated Press

Health bill costs \$829 billion over decade

DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Health care legislation drafted by a key U.S. Senate committee would expand coverage to 94 percent of the eligible population at a 10-year cost of \$829 billion, congressional budget experts said Wednesday in a preliminary estimate.

The Congressional Budget Office added that the measure would reduce federal deficits by \$81 billion over a decade and probably lead to "continued reductions in federal budget deficits" in the years beyond.

The report paves the way for the Senate Finance Committee to vote as early as Friday on the legislation, which is largely in line with President Barack Obama's call for the most sweeping overhaul of the U.S. health care system in a half-century.

The United States is the only developed nation that does not have a comprehensive national health care plan for all its citizens. Obama has said overhauling health care is vital to the United States' long-term economic recovery. Sen. Max Baucus, a Democrat and the committee chairman and principal architect of the measure, hailed the budget report.

"This legislation, I believe, is a smart

investment on our federal balance sheet. It's an even smarter investment for American families, businesses and our economy," he said on the Senate floor.

The committee Baucus chairs is the fifth and last of the congressional panels to debate health care. The Senate Finance version has a decided middle-of-the-road flavor, shunning any provision for the government to sell insurance in competition with private industry. Nor does it require businesses to offer coverage to their workers, although large firms that do not would be required to offset the cost of any government subsidies going to those employees.

The measure would require that millions of Americans purchase private insurance for the first time, and would set up a new marketplace where policies would be available.

Federal subsidies would be available to millions of lower-income individuals and families to help defray the cost of coverage that would otherwise be out of their reach.

The measure would be paid for through a variety of tax increases and spending cuts, including savings of hundreds of billions of dollars from Medicare, the government-run health care program for the elderly.

Continued on Next Page

Abbas faces more anger over U.N. war crimes report



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, looks on during a joint press conference with Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, unseen, at Chigi palace, Premier's office, in Rome, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009.

Associated Press

KARIN LAUB,

Associated Press Writer

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — In five turbulent years in office, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has never faced as much outrage as over his decision to suspend efforts to get Israeli officials put on trial for war crimes in Gaza.

Continued on Page B6



Pakistani protesters rally against the United States in Multan, Pakistan on Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009. Pakistani leaders jostled Wednesday over a multibillion-dollar U.S. humanitarian aid bill that the ruling party praises as a lynchpin to strengthening democracy here but that opponents say will lead to greater American interference in Pakistani affairs.

Associated Press

Pakistan's military rejects U.S. aid bill

Read Page B8



Budget Director Peter Orszag is interviewed by The Associated Press in Washington, Monday, Oct. 5, 2009.

HEALTH BILL

Continued from Page B1

Democratic leaders in both houses are

Associated Press
hoping to hold votes on health care on the floor of the House and Senate within a few weeks.

Anticipating approval by the Finance Committee this week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is already overseeing efforts to merge that bill with an alternative approved by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

Reid is subject to intense cross-pressure, not only from the members of the two committees, but also from the Obama administration and rank-and-file senators seeking to mold the legislation to their liking.

Reid also must take into account the likely need to amass 60 votes behind any legislation, the majority needed to overcome any Republican delaying tactics.

Baucus has expressed confidence he has the votes for his measure inside the Finance Committee, and the major lingering question there is whether Sen. Olympia Snowe will break ranks

with fellow Republicans and vote for it. She has been steadily noncommittal in public statements, but is under pressure from her own party to oppose the legislation.

Wednesday's report from CBO's director, Douglas Elmendorf, stressed that the estimates were preliminary. It said that by 2019, "the number of nonelderly people who are uninsured would be reduced by about 29 million," either through private insurance or by enrolling in federal programs.

That would leave an additional 25 million uninsured, about one-third of them illegal immigrants who are not eligible for coverage under the bill.

"Under the proposal, the share of legal nonelderly residents with insurance coverage would rise from about 83 percent currently to about 94 percent," the letter said. □



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Pot legalization gains momentum in California

MARCUS WOHLSEN

Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)

— Marijuana advocates are gathering signatures to get at least three pot-legalization measures on the ballot in 2010 in California, setting up what could be a groundbreaking clash with the federal government over U.S. drug policy.

At least one poll shows voters would support lifting the pot prohibition, which would make the state of 40 million the first in the nation to legalize marijuana.

Such action would also send the state into a headlong conflict with the U.S. government while raising questions about how federal law enforcement could enforce its drug laws in the face of a massive government-sanctioned pot industry.

The state already has a thriving marijuana trade, thanks to a first-of-its-kind 1996 ballot measure that allowed people to smoke pot for medical purposes. But full legalization could turn medical marijuana dispensaries into all-purpose pot stores, and the open sale of joints could become commonplace on mom-and-pop liquor store counters in liberal locales like Oakland and Santa Cruz.

Under federal law, marijuana is illegal, period. After overseeing a series of raids that destroyed more than 300,000 marijuana plants in California's Sierra Nevada foothills this summer, federal drug czar Gil Kerlikowske proclaimed, "Legalization is not in the president's vocabulary, and it's not in mine."

The U.S. Supreme Court also has ruled that federal law enforcement agents have the right to crack down even on marijuana users and distributors who are in compliance with California's medical marijuana law.

But some legal scholars and policy analysts say the government will not be able to require California to help in enforcing the federal marijuana ban if the state legalizes the drug.

Without assistance from the

state's legions of narcotics officers, they say, federal agents could do little to curb marijuana in California.

"Even though that federal ban is still in place and the federal government can enforce it, it doesn't mean the states have to follow suit," said Robert Mikos, a Vanderbilt University law professor who recently published a paper about the issue.

Nothing can stop federal anti-drug agents from making marijuana arrests, even if Californians legalize pot, he said. However, the U.S. government cannot pass a law requiring local and state police, sheriff's departments or state narcotics enforcers to help.

That is significant, because nearly all arrests for marijuana crimes are made at the state level. Of more than 847,000 marijuana-related arrests in 2008, for example, just over 6,300 suspects were booked by federal law enforcement, or fewer than 1 percent.

State marijuana bans have allowed the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to focus on big cases, said Rosalie Pacula, director of drug policy research at the Rand Corp.

"It's only something the feds are going to be concerned about if you're growing tons of pot," Pacula said. For anything less, she said, "they don't have the

resources to waste on it."

In a typical recent prosecution, 29-year-old Luke Scarmazzo was sentenced to nearly 22 years and co-defendant Ricardo Ruiz Montes to 20 years in federal prison for drug trafficking through a medical marijuana dispensary in Modesto.

At his bond hearing, prosecutors showed a rap video in which Scarmazzo boasts about his successful marijuana business, taunts federal authorities and carries cardboard boxes filled with cash. The DEA said the pair made more than \$4.5 million in marijuana sales in less than two years.

The DEA would not speculate on the effects of any decision by California to legalize pot. "Marijuana is illegal under federal law and DEA will continue to attack large-scale drug trafficking organizations at every level," spokeswoman Dawn Dearden said.

The most conservative of the three ballot measures would only legalize possession of up to one ounce of pot for personal use by adults 21 and older—an amount that already under state law can only result at most in a \$100 fine.

The proposal would also allow anyone to grow a plot of marijuana up to 5 feet-by-5 feet (1.5-by-1.5 meters) on their private property. The size, Pacula said, seems specifically



In this Aug. 20, 2009 file photo showing members of the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department dismantling a marijuana garden in a remote area of El Dorado county, Calif. After overseeing a series of raids that destroyed more than 300,000 marijuana plants in California's Sierra Nevada foothills this summer, federal drug czar Gil Kerlikowske proclaimed, "Legalization is not in the president's vocabulary, and it's not in mine." Nevertheless, advocates are now gathering signatures to get no fewer than three pot-legalization measures on the state's 2010 ballot. And at least one poll shows voters would support lifting the pot prohibition in California.

Associated Press

designed to keep the total number of plants grown below 100, the threshold for DEA attention.

The greatest potential for conflict with the U.S. government would likely come from the provision that would give local governments the power to decide city-by-city whether to allow pot sales.

Hundreds of medical marijuana dispensaries across California

already operate openly with only modest federal interference. If recreational marijuana became legal, these businesses could operate without requiring their customers to qualify as patients.

Any business that grew bigger than the already typical storefront shops, however, would probably be too tempting a target for federal prosecution, experts said. □

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Government says most kids exposed to violence



U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, center, addresses the media in Chicago, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009.

Associated Press

DEVLIN BARRETT

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Justice Department officials said Wednesday that most children in the United States are exposed to violence in their daily lives, which Attorney General Eric Holder called "staggering."

A leading criminologist cautioned that the government-sponsored survey may be lumping serious and minor incidents together.

More than 60 percent of children surveyed were

exposed to violence within the past year, either directly or indirectly, according to data compiled by the department. The survey's compilers defined exposure to violence as being a victim, or having witnessed violence, or learning about violence against a relative, friend, or hearing about a threat to their school or home. That approach raised questions for some.

"What concerns me when you hear numbers like this is that in their attempt to be inclusive, which is commendable, the

definition of violence becomes so broad that the results lack real meaning," said James Alan Fox, criminal justice professor at Northeastern University. "If you broaden the definition of violence so much, then most people will be included."

Nearly half of all children surveyed were assaulted at least once in the past year, and about 6 percent were victimized sexually, the survey found.

One in five of those between the ages of 14 and 17 reported they had seen a shooting.

"Those numbers are astonishing, and they are unacceptable," Holder said in Chicago, where he was meeting with local officials to discuss the disturbing beating death of a high school student by other teens.

"We simply cannot stand for an epidemic of violence that robs our youth of their childhood

and perpetuates a cycle in which today's victims become tomorrow's criminals," Holder said.

Among the survey's other findings:

—Almost one in 10 children said they saw one family member assault another in the past year.

—More than one-half of the children, about 57 percent, reported having been assaulted at some point in their lives.

—Thirteen percent reported having been physically bullied in the last year.

The results were based on telephone interviews of 4,549 children and adolescents aged 17 and younger between January and May of 2008. For children ages 9 and younger, a parent or guardian answered the questions. The National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence was sponsored by the Justice Department's

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, with help from the Centers for Disease Control. It was conducted by university researchers.

The attorney general and Education Secretary Arne Duncan were in Chicago Wednesday to meet with local officials, parents, and students to discuss the vicious beating of a 16-year-old high school student whose killing last month was captured on a cell phone video.

Derrion Albert, an honor roll student at Christian Fenger Academy High School, was attacked when he got caught up in a mob of teens about six blocks from school. Video shows him curled up on the sidewalk as fellow teens kick him and hit him with splintered railroad ties. So far, four teens have been charged in his death. □

House-Senate panel offers plan for Gitmo detainees

By ANDREW TAYLOR

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — In a partial victory for President Obama's troubled bid to close the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, key congressional negotiators adopted a plan Wednesday to permit terror suspects held there to continue to be transferred into the United States to face trial.

The House-Senate compromise was reached by Democratic negotiators on a \$42.8 billion homeland security appropriations bill. It mostly tracks current restrictions put in place in June and is similar to a version backed by Republicans earlier in the year that allowed detainees to be transferred to U.S. soil for trial.

Now, Republicans are pressing for an absolute ban on transfers of Guantanamo detainees into the U.S.

The move sets up a clash with Republicans and, potentially, a difficult vote for dozens of House Democrats, who only last week voted in favor of a GOP plan to block any detainee transfers into the U.S. That vote came on a nonbinding motion, but Wednesday's compromise would carry the force of law for the budget year that began Oct. 1.

Obama's order to close Guantanamo by mid-January has vexed his Democratic allies on Capitol Hill, who complain that it was dropped on them without a plan to carry it out. Republicans have been enthusiastic in their opposition to the plan and clearly

feel that public opinion and the politics of Guantanamo are working in their favor. However, prominent members of the party, including last fall's presidential nominee, Sen. John McCain of Arizona, want to see the facility closed as well. At a House Appropriations Committee session in June, the panel's top Republican, Jerry Lewis of California, sought to ensure that detainees could be brought to the U.S. for prosecution. But amid the uproar over Guantanamo, Democrats have been on the defensive. Just Tuesday, the Senate passed a \$626 billion Pentagon budget bill that would ban outright any transfer of accused enemy combatants from Guantanamo to U.S. soil. The plan unveiled Wednesday could serve as a template, however, for dealing with the issue on the defense measure and other appropriations bills — if Democrats can succeed in passing it.

House Democrats, though, were openly exploring the option of a legislative two-step on the underlying homeland security spending bill that would block Republicans from another vote on the detention center.

Supporters of closing Guantanamo say the facility and the detention of suspects who may have been held indefinitely without trial have hurt the United States' reputation across the globe. And, they said, fears of bringing the detainees to the U.S. are exaggerated — existing federal prisons are more than adequate to safely hold them. □

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Thousands mob Detroit center in hopes of free cash

By COREY WILLIAMS
Associated Press Writer

DETROIT — Scuffles erupted as several thousand Detroit residents jockeyed, pushed and shoved Wednesday to get free money being offered to only 3,500 of the city's recently or soon to be homeless.

Several received medical treatment for fainting or exhaustion while frantically trying to obtain the applications for federal housing assistance. The long lines and short tempers highlighted the frustration and desperation that Detroit residents feel struggling through an economic nightmare.

The line around Cobo Center, a downtown convention center, started forming well before daybreak. Anger flared within a few hours as more people sought out a dwindling number of applications for the program.

Members of the Detroit Police Department's Gang Squad and other tactical units were called in for crowd control. Several people reportedly passed out from exhaustion and had to be treated by emergency medical personnel. Some minor injuries were reported, and no arrests were made.

"It's a sign of the times, and we can't deny we have people here who are in need," said Karen Dumas, communications director for Mayor Dave Bing. "It's scary and very disappointing. It also

shows a need for redirection for our city."

One in four working-age adults in Detroit is without a job, and the city's home foreclosure rate continues to be among the nation's highest. One in four families and three out of every 10 individuals live below the poverty level, according to the U.S. Census.

Before Wednesday, Detroit Planning and Development workers already had spent two days handling long lines at City Hall and other locations. Rumors that \$3,000 stimulus checks from the Obama administration spurred heavy turnouts.

That helped get 33-year-old William Lambert and his 27-year-old fiancee, Iesha Wagner, to City Hall on Tuesday. Lambert said he is out of work and living with Wagner at her mother's home. "We kind of fell on hard times," he said. "It's hard working as a carpenter and then not working at all. It's not good right now."

Odessa Willis also heard the stimulus rumors, but needed to find out for herself Tuesday.

"I'm here to meet a need so I won't become homeless and my utilities will be paid," said Willis, 56. "With this economy, I'm not able to keep my head above water."

The city distributed more than 50,000 applications for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program

over the past several days before running out Wednesday morning. Only 3,500 people who qualify will receive the money — a maximum \$3,000 per applicant, Dumas said.

Many residents taking applications won't qualify because of the program's strict income requirements. Dumas also fears people who really need the money might have missed out on applications because of the long lines. To be considered, applicants must have lived in Detroit for the past six months, been



Detroit residents fill out forms to apply for federal stimulus funds at Cobo Center in Detroit, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009. Scuffles erupted and several people were treated for fainting and exhaustion as thousands of Detroit residents tried to apply for free federal money.

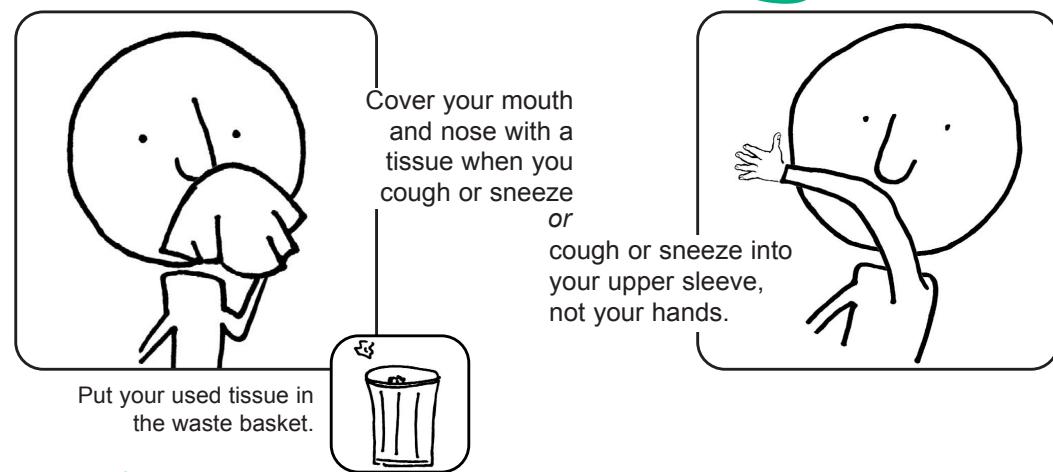
Associated Press

homeless within the past year and be of low to moderate income. A single applicant is ineligible with an income of

more than \$24,850 annually; the maximum annual income for an eligible family of four is \$35,500. □

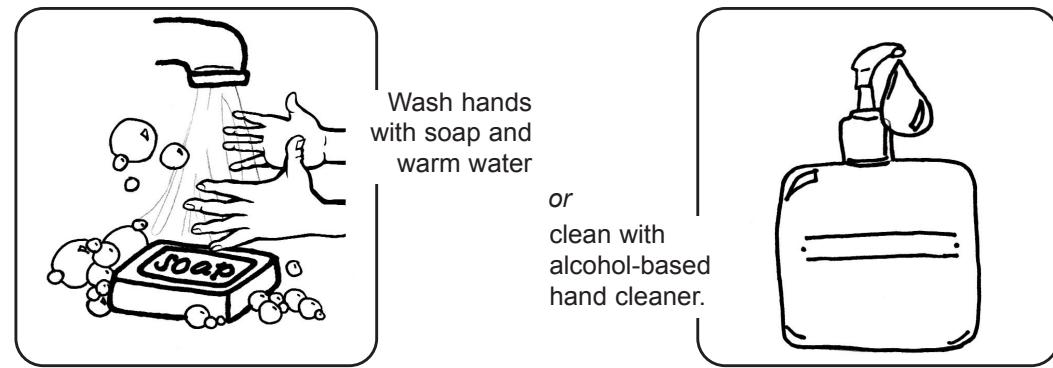
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WAR CRIMES
Continued from Page B1

On Wednesday, Gaza professors threw shoes at his defaced image and West Bank commentators called for his resignation, the latest signs Abbas may have miscalculated in bowing to what Palestinian officials say was intense U.S. pressure.

Abbas is unlikely to be forced out of office because he enjoys strong Western support and has ruled the West Bank without challenge since his Islamic militant Hamas rivals drove him out of Gaza in 2007.

However, the scandal could cause lasting harm to the 74-year-old Palestinian leader's standing with voters and his ability to negotiate with Israel. In the short term, the U.S. is pushing for a quick resumption of Mideast peace talks, but gaps remain wide on what it takes to get back to the table. A weakened Abbas may not be in a position to make concessions when President Barack Obama's special Mideast envoy, George

Mitchell, returns to the region this week.

"This is the worst position that Abbas has found himself in since he was elected president," said Hani al-Masri, a West Bank commentator.

At the center of the uproar is a 575-page U.N. report about Israel's three-week war in Gaza last winter, which alleges that both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes, something both sides deny. Last week, Abbas withdrew Palestinian support for a vote in the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva to have the report sent to the U.N. General Assembly for possible action — the first of many steps toward possibly establishing war crimes tribunals. With the Palestinians out of the picture, the council set the report aside for six months.

Abbas made the decision under heavy U.S. pressure, Palestinian and Israeli officials have said. U.S. officials told Palestinian leaders that a war crimes debate would complicate efforts to

restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, according to participants in the meetings.

The anger over Abbas' decision was intense because many Palestinians felt he chose not to pursue a rare opportunity to win justice for Gaza's war victims, said Mustafa Barghouti, an independent Palestinian legislator.

"Finally, there was a moment, in front of the international community, to hold Israel accountable," Barghouti said. "What he (Abbas) did, or his government did, it's now perceived that they gave Israel the leeway to escape from that."

Nearly 1,400 Palestinians were killed in the war, including hundreds of civilians, along with 13 Israelis. Israel launched the war to end years of Hamas rocket fire on Israeli border towns.

Abbas has been away for most of the crisis, visiting Jordan, Yemen and Italy, and is only to return to the West Bank later this week. His aides initially

defended the decision, saying a deferral did not mean the report was being buried, only that Palestinian diplomats needed more time to win international support for it.

However, Yasser Abed Rabbo, a senior Abbas adviser, said Wednesday that the Palestinian leadership had erred, the first such acknowledgment after six days of escalating protests.

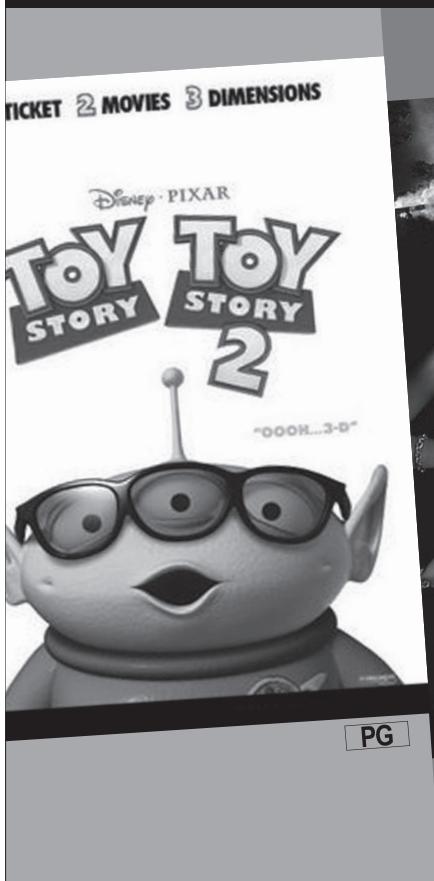
"What happened is a mistake, but (it) can be repaired," Abed Rabbo, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization, told the Voice of Palestine radio in a taped statement. "We have the courage to admit there was a mistake."

In New York, the U.N. Security Council was to meet Wednesday to discuss a letter from Libya, the only Arab member on the 15-nation panel, seeking an emergency meeting on the report, which was written by South African Judge Richard Goldstone. The Palestinian U.N. Mission said it supports the Libyan request. □

Associated Press



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| <input type="checkbox"/> PG | SUSKE & WISKE | daily: 12:45 matinee: 12:45 | 5:00 3:00 | late show: | 12:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PG | FAME | daily: 4:00 matinee: 12:00 | 6:45 2:15 | 9:00 | late show: 11:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | FINAL DESTINATION 4 | daily: matinee: | | 8:00 | 10:00 12:00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | JENNIFER'S BODY | daily: matinee: 1:00 | 5:30 3:15 | 7:45 | 10:00 12:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | WHITEOUT | daily: matinee: | 7:00 | 9:15 | late show: 11:30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | THE INFORMANT | daily: matinee: 1:00 | 6:00 3:30 | 8:30 | late show: 11:00 |

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| <input type="checkbox"/> PG | TOY STORY 1&2 3D | daily: 4:15 matinee: 12:15 | 6:15 2:15 | late show: | 12:00 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW | SURROGATES | daily: matinee: 1:15 | 6:30 3:45 | 8:45 | late show: 11:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | JENNIFER'S BODY | daily: matinee: 12:15 | 4:45 2:30 | 7:00 | 9:15 11:30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PG-13 | TYLER PERRY'S I CAN DO BAD ALL BY MYSELF | daily: matinee: | | 8:30 | late show: 11:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | ZOMBIELAND | daily: matinee: 12:00 | 6:00 2:00 | 8:00 | 10:00 12:00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PG-13 | G:I: JOE: THE RISE OF THE COBRA | daily: matinee: 12:30 | 6:00 3:30 | late show: | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | FINAL DESTINATION 4 | daily: matinee: | 8:15 | 10:15 | late show: 12:15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R | WHITEOUT | daily: matinee: 12:45 | 5:15 3:00 | 7:30 | 9:45 12:00 |

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Top court overturns Italian premier's immunity

ALESSANDRA RIZZO
ARIEL DAVID

Associated Press Writers

ROME (AP) — Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi vowed to stay on and "go forward" Wednesday after an Italian court struck down a law granting him immunity from prosecution and allowed trials for corruption and tax fraud to resume in Milan. There were immediate calls for his resignation.

The decision by the Constitutional Court dealt Berlusconi one of the most serious blows in his 15-year-long battle with the Italian judiciary. It handed prosecutors another chance to ask for his conviction and added to a list of problems that already includes a headline-grabbing sex scandal.

The billionaire businessman-turned-politician dismissed any suggestion of resignation, and his conservative allies, who dominate parliament, quickly rallied to his support. "Nothing will happen, we will go forward," the premier told reporters in front of his residence in Rome.

"The trials they will hurl at me in Milan are real farces," he said. "I will detract some hours from taking care of the government to go there and show them to be liars."

The ever-combative premier said he felt "invigorated" by the challenge and ended his brief statement by shouting "Long live Italy! Long live Berlusconi!"

Berlusconi, 73, continues to be widely popular in Italy, despite accusations from his wife that he has had inappropriate relationships with far younger women and allegations from a self-described call girl that he spent a night with her. The scandal erupted in the spring after his wife announced she was divorcing him.

Berlusconi says he is "no saint" but has denied ever paying anyone for sex or having any improper relationships.

The law overturned Wednesday was pushed through by Berlusconi's conservative coalition in 2008 when he faced separate trials in Milan for corruption and tax fraud tied to his Mediaset broadcasting empire. It granted immunity from prosecution while in office to the country's four top office holders — the premier, the president of the republic and the two parliament speakers.

The proceedings against Berlusconi were suspended as a result of the law, drawing accusations that it was tailor-made for the premier.

The corruption trial is

particularly threatening because, in the meantime, the premier's co-defendant has been convicted of accepting a bribe to lie in court to protect Berlusconi in another case.

Still, even if convicted, the premier would not be obliged to resign and could simply appeal, as sentences in Italy are usually not served until all avenues of appeal are exhausted.

Berlusconi has denied all charges, and his lawyers had argued in court on Tuesday that he could not be a defendant and at the same time serve as premier.

But the 15-judge Constitutional Court, which deals with all matters regarding the constitutionality of Italian law, said that after two days of deliberations it had found the legislation violated the principle that all are equal before the law.

It also rejected the measure on formal grounds because it was not passed with the lengthy procedure that must be used for any legislation concerning the constitution.

The breakdown of the vote is not made public in Italy, but state and private Italian media reported, without citing sources, that the judges split nine to six. "I hope that today, in light of the court's decision,



In this photo taken Sunday Sept. 27, 2009, Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi delivers his speech as he attends a meeting in Milan, Italy. News reports say Wednesday Oct. 7, 2009 a top Italian court has overturned an immunity law shielding Premier Berlusconi from a corruption trial in Milan.

Associated Press

democracy."

Others sided with the premier, saying the decision was politically motivated and that leaders should have immunity while they are in office.

"The people elected Berlusconi and he should be left to govern in peace," said Brigitte Ipoletto, a 72-year-old retired woman.

In the Milan corruption trial, Berlusconi was accused of ordering the 1997 payment of at least \$600,000 to British lawyer David Mills in exchange for the lawyer's false testimony at two hearings in other corruption cases in the 1990s. □

Pakistan's military rejects U.S. aid bill

NAHAL TOOSI

Associated Press Writer

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's powerful military on Wednesday rejected U.S. attempts to link billions of dollars in foreign aid to increased monitoring of its anti-terror efforts, complicating American attempts to strike al-Qaida and Taliban fighters on the Afghan border.

Although the U.S.-backed government of President Asif Ali Zardari has the final say on whether to accept the money, the unusual public criticism threatens to force its hand and undermine military cooperation with the Americans just as the Pakistani army prepares for what could be its most important offensive against extremists since the U.S.-led anti-terror campaign began exactly eight years ago. Any breakdown in intelligence sharing and other types of cooperation would hurt the American fight against a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan. U.S. and NATO commanders say the war there cannot be won unless Islamabad does more to

tackle extremists on its side of the border. In Washington, President Barack Obama met with his national security team for a strategy session on Afghanistan after signaling that he was not considering a troop withdrawal. The session came amid new polls showing waning support for the war in the United States.

The military's criticism of the bill came in a brief written statement that said senior commanders, including the army chief, "expressed serious concern regarding clauses impacting on national security."

Among other strings, the bill conditions U.S. aid on whether Pakistan government maintains effective control over the military, including its budgets, the chain of command and top promotions.

Some analysts said the military's statement had little to do with genuine dislike of a bill that stands to help crumbling schools, roads and hospitals. They said the army was sending a message to the Pakistani and U.S. governments about the limits



In this photo released by the Pakistan Inter Services Public Relations Department, Chief of Pakistan Army Gen. Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani, center, presides top military commanders' meeting in General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009. Pakistan's powerful military is expressing "serious concern" over a multibillion-dollar U.S. humanitarian aid package planned for the country. The bill would give Pakistan \$1.5 billion annually over the next five years for democratic, economic and social development programs.

Associated Press

of civilian control in a country that's been subject to military rule for nearly half of its 62-year history.

"Clearly the government is under direct pressure from the army," said Cyril Almeida, a columnist for Dawn newspaper. "The army's public statement indicates that it is sending a message that says look, we are in charge of security issues."

The military is believed to

have increased its cooperation with U.S. forces over the past year, shared intelligence for numbers of U.S. missile strikes on militant targets — most notably the one which killed Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud. The U.S. military clearly hopes for more Pakistani cooperation in hunting down other targets as well, including al-Qaida and Afghan Taliban leaders who are less of a priority for the

Pakistanis. Political tension in Islamabad would pose another obstacle to U.S. war goals. The debate comes as the army stepped up preparations for a new offensive in South Waziristan, an operation that would face steep challenges, ranging from harsh terrain to well dug-in militants. An estimated 10,000 well-armed militants, including foreign fighters, are believed to be in the region. □

Somali pirate error ends with 5 in French brig



This photo released by the French Navy shows pirates holding their hands up to soldiers, left, of the French vessel La Somme, early Wednesday Oct. 7, 2009 off the Somalia coast. Somali pirates in two skiffs fired on a French navy vessel early Wednesday after apparently mistaking it for a commercial boat, the French military said. The French ship gave chase and captured five suspected pirates.

Associated Press

ELAINE GANLEY,
Associated Press Writer

PARIS (AP) — Somali pirates in two skiffs fired on a French navy vessel early Wednesday after apparently mistaking it for a commercial boat, the French military said. The French ship gave chase and captured five suspected

pirates.

No one was wounded by the volleys from the Kalashnikov rifles directed at La Somme, a 3,800-ton refueling ship, French military spokesman Rear Adm. Christophe Prazuck said.

La Somme "was probably taken for a commercial ship

by the two small skiffs" about 250 nautical miles (290 statute miles) off Somalia's coast, Prazuck said.

"They understood their mistake too late," he said.

One skiff fled, and La Somme pursued the second one in an hour-long chase.

"There were five suspected pirates on board. No arms, no water, no food," Prazuck said.

France is a key member of the EU's naval mission, Operation Atalanta, fighting Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden. It has aggressively tracked and caught suspected pirates and handed over at least 22 to Kenya. An additional 15 suspects were brought to France for prosecution after allegedly seizing boats belonging to French nationals.

President Nicolas Sarkozy called for tougher action against piracy last year after dozens of attacks. □

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Carter seeks to boost Caribbean malaria fight

GREG BLUESTEIN

Associated Press Writer

OUANAMINTHE, Haiti (AP)

— Former President Jimmy Carter traveled to Haiti and the Dominican Republic to meet political leaders, health workers and malaria victims Wednesday in hopes of jump-starting efforts to eradicate the disease in the Caribbean.

The battle against the mosquito-borne disease in the neighboring countries has been frustrating, with health officials complaining of a lack of cooperation between both country's governments.

Carter said on his visit to Ouanaminthe and to Dajabon in the Dominican Republic, just across a river border separating the two countries, that he hopes to expand a \$200,000 pilot project established in those towns by the nonprofit Carter Center to curb malaria's spread.

The project's funding runs out early next year, but Carter said he hopes governments, nonprofit health groups and private foundations will pick up the tab for a broader effort. "One of the most important developments has been the new cooperation between the two countries," Carter said while touring a Haitian hospital that treats many malaria victims. "And for the first time in history, they are targeting the complete elimination of the

disease instead of just treating sick people."

An estimated 30,000 people in Haiti and several thousand more across the border suffer each year from malaria, which causes high fevers and flu-like symptoms that kills more than one million people each year, mostly in Africa.

It was the second visit to Haiti in a week by a former U.S. president.

Bill Clinton, named U.N. special envoy to Haiti in May, attended an investment conference last Thursday in Haiti's capital and spent Friday promoting its tourist sites.

Health officials say a 10-year, Haiti-wide program to eliminate malaria by 2020 would likely cost \$200 million.

Another \$50 million would be needed to wipe out lymphatic filariasis, another painful illness carried by mosquitoes that can swell limbs to grotesque proportions.

That price tag may seem daunting, particularly in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. But Carter, who was quickly surrounded at each stop by dozens of Haitians and Dominicans seeking a glimpse of him, said the costs to eradicate the disease pale in comparison to pricier health initiatives in wealthier nations.

"A tiny bit of money can

completely eradicate these diseases," he said.

Ridding Hispaniola's two countries of the disease would also eliminate the threat that it could spread to nearby islands, including Jamaica and the Bahamas.

"We want to help both sides raise their sights up from the day-to-day battle," said Dr. Don Hopkins, the director of the Carter Center's health programs.

The Atlanta-based center's project distributes nets treated with insecticide to drape over beds, microscopes to help lab technicians and motorbikes so field workers can zip through cramped alleys to test and treat residents.

It also helps bolster efforts in both countries to track, contain and treat a disease that spreads from fetid ditches and gullies of standing water.

In the Dominican Republic, for one, health workers journey each night to a foul-smelling farm in La Bomba, a Dajabon neighborhood with the highest infection rates, and test captured mosquitoes for the disease.

Across the border in Haiti, residents of the slums on the outskirts of Ouanaminthe greet health worker Jovind Fritzner as he makes his rounds, repeating verbatim his radio warnings on the dangers of malaria. They kid him



Former US President Jimmy Carter, center, applauds next to his wife Rosalynn Carter during their visit to the La Bomba neighborhood in Dajabon, Dominican Republic, on the border with Haiti, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009. Carter is visiting Haiti and the Dominican Republic to urge their leaders to forge a pact to rid the island of Hispaniola of malaria.

Associated Press

about when he'll return with heavy equipment to wipe out mosquito breeding sites.

"If we had the equipment, I will make sure we kill them," Fritzner said in Creole as he waved his arms in a chopping motion. "It's a little bit frustrating. There's a lot more to be done. We'll need more equipment, we'll need more people — but I'm optimistic." Health workers said it is difficult to develop a strategy that fits both Haiti and the more developed Dominican side.

But they said getting leaders of both nations to commit to a long-term program may be the biggest challenge.

"We share the same island so it's impossible to eradicate malaria unless we're together," said Dr. Joanel Mondestin, who heads Haiti's northeast regional health office. "For the malaria, there is no border

— it's all the same. This is a fight for both of us."

Few victims of malaria will venture to dream of a day when the disease is gone from the island.

Paulane Antoine, who lives in a cinderblock house with one mosquito net for her and her eight children, said malaria is a constant concern in Ouanaminthe's slums, where barefoot children play on garbage-strewn streets.

Antoine's 6-year-old boy and 3-year-old girl were infected with malaria this year, but detection and medication saved them from death. Still, Antoine said, she worries about which of her neighbors or family members will contract the disease next.

"We already have enough problems," she said. "It's already hard enough to stay healthy here." □

Dominican Republic bans consecutive re-election

RAMON ALMANZAR

Associated Press Writer

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — The Dominican Republic has amended the constitution to prevent presidents from serving consecutive terms and to open campaigns to younger candidates. The changes mean candidates as young as 30 can now enter presidential elections and that President Leonel Fernandez cannot run for office again in voting three years from now, although he could run again after that.

He is serving his second consecutive term after a 2002 amendment allowed presidents to serve two consecutive terms. Fernandez previously served as president from 1996 to 2000 and from 2004 to 2008. He supports the new restrictions.

The Caribbean country once allowed indefinite re-elections, but adopted restrictions in the mid-1990s after allegations of electoral fraud. Citizens remain wary of presidents of the likes of Joaquin Balaguer, who held power for more than two decades and was known for jailing critics. □



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SPORTS**Aruba TODAY****Yankees rally past Twins 7-2 in playoff opener**

By RONALD BLUM

AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK — Derek Jeter and CC Sabathia got the New York Yankees off to a winning postseason start in their new ballpark. Even Alex Rodriguez broke out of his playoff rut against these tired Minnesota Twins.

Jeter tied it with a two-run homer, Sabathia was the ace the Yankees signed him to be, and New York romped over the Twins 7-2 Wednesday night in the opener of their AL playoff series.

After Jeter's third-inning homer off loser Brian Duensing pulled New York even at 2-2, Nick Swisher pulled a go-ahead double down the left-field line in the fourth that scored Robinson Cano from first as the Twins made a pair of poor throws.

Continued on Page B12



New York Yankees' Derek Jeter watches his two-run home run, in front of Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer during the third inning of Game 1 of the American League division baseball series at Yankee Stadium in New York on Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009.

Associated Press

Jets acquire WR Braylon Edwards from Browns

Edwards said he felt welcomed right away because he was a target of some good-natured jokes as soon as he walked into the locker room.

"A couple of guys cracked on the pants I had on," said Edwards, who already knows several of the Jets players. "I took that as a good sign."

The Jets dealt wide receiver Chansi Stuckey, linebacker Jason Trusnik and two undisclosed draft choices in return for Edwards, who has 10 receptions for 139 yards but was shut out for the first time in his career in the winless Browns' 23-20 overtime loss to Cincinnati on Sunday.

"I believe coming here to a team that's doing well with a new head coach that has them going in the right direction ... is a fresh start and a clean slate," Edwards said.

Edwards was on his way to the Browns' facility at 7:45 a.m. when he received a call from coach Eric Mangini, who told him to come to his office, where he was told of the deal.

"I hadn't any clue I was going to be traded," Edwards said.

Edwards, in his fifth season, is expected to practice Thursday and coach Rex Ryan said he will start Monday night at Miami for the Jets.

"I think he's going to fit right in with our group," Ryan said. New York was lacking a legitimate deep threat for Mark Sanchez to throw to opposite Jerricho Cotchery, and the Jets believe Edwards will also help jumpstart the running game.

"I've had to defend against him twice a year in Baltimore, and that's not fun," Ryan said. "He is a matchup nightmare." □



J Cleveland Browns wide receiver Braylon Edwards (17) drops a pass while defended by Cincinnati Bengals cornerback Leon Hall (29) in the first quarter of an NFL football game Sunday, Oct. 4, 2009, in Cleveland.

Associated Press

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr.

AP Sports Writer

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — Braylon Edwards' arrival was picture-perfect for the New York Jets.

The talented but troubled wide receiver was acquired from Cleveland on Wednesday and showed up at the team's facility shortly after practice ended — just in time to try on his new green and white threads and be included in the team picture.

"It was interesting getting off a plane and rushing right to a team photo," Edwards said, smiling. "The guys in the locker room were good."

Mercury even WNBA finals with 90-77 win over Fever

By CLIFF BRUNT

AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Cappie Pondexter scored 22 points and the Phoenix Mercury beat the Indiana Fever 90-77 in Game 4 of the WNBA finals on Wednesday night to avoid elimination.

Penny Taylor added 17 points for the Mercury while Diana Taurasi and Tangela Smith each scored 16 to even the series 2-2 and force Game 5 Friday in Phoenix.

Tamika Catchings led Indiana with 24 points and 12 rebounds and Ebony Hoffman added 17 points. All-Star Katie Douglas, who was hoping to celebrate a clinching win in her hometown, scored seven points on 2-for-14 shooting.

The Fever had the homecourt, an active sellout crowd and local celebrities such as Indianapolis Colts players Peyton Manning and Reggie Wayne in attendance. It wasn't enough.

Phoenix shot 72 percent from the field in the first quarter to jump out to a 33-22 lead. The Fever held the Mercury to 16 points in the second quarter and cut their deficit to 49-47 at the half. Indiana tied the score at 59 on a layup by Catchings with 4:30 left in the third quarter, but Phoenix went on a quick 6-0 run to force a timeout and put the fans, who had been standing in anticipation of a Fever lead, back in their seats. The Mercury extended their lead to 72-65 at the end of the third quarter. □

Lee tosses 6-hitter as Phillies top Rockies 5-1

By ROB MAADDI

AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Cliff Lee pitched like an ace instead of a postseason rookie. Lee dominated the Colorado Rockies, tossing a six-hitter, and the Philadelphia Phillies began their World Series title defense with a 5-1 victory in their playoff opener Wednesday.

Raul Ibanez had two hits and two RBIs, and Ryan Howard and Jayson Werth drove in runs with key extra-base hits off 15-game winner Ubaldo Jimenez.

Lee, the reigning AL Cy Young Award winner, struck out five and had no walks in his first career playoff start. He retired 16 straight batters at one point until Garrett Atkins hit a wind-blown double in the seventh. Lee lost his shutout when Troy Tulowitzki doubled in a run with two outs in the ninth.

Game 2 of the best-of-five NL division series is set for Thursday with Cole Hamels, last year's World Series and NLCS MVP, on the mound for the Phillies against Colorado's Aaron Cook.

Some questioned manager Charlie Manuel's decision to give Lee the ball over the playoff-tested Hamels for the first game. But Lee made his manager look brilliant with a masterful performance.

On a day when swirling winds made flyballs an adventure, Lee ignored the elements and shut down the NL's second-highest scoring offense. Avoiding the adventures that come with the Phillies bullpen, Lee mixed a deceptive fastball with off-speed pitches, had pinpoint accuracy and threw 113 pitches.

The hard-throwing Jimenez was equally impressive against the league's No. 1-scoring offense for four innings, but ran out of gas in the fifth. He got chased with no outs in the sixth after allowing nine hits and five runs in five-plus innings.

A sellout crowd of 46,452 — the largest in the six-year history of Citizens Bank Park — rocked the ballpark, waving their white-and-red "Fightin' Phils" rally towels.

The Phillies were 7-0 at home last October and set a franchise attendance record this season.

Werth, one of five All-Stars in Philadelphia's lineup, got it started with a walk in the fifth. He scored when Ibanez ripped a double into the right-field corner. Ibanez's hit fired up the raucous crowd, which screamed "Rauuuuuuuu!" Carlos Ruiz followed with a single to right to make it 2-0. The Phillies got insurance runs in the sixth. Chase Utley led off with a single and stole second. Howard lined a run-scoring double to left that mixed up Carlos Gonzalez, who fell backward into the wall.

Werth followed with a drive that hit high off the left-center field wall. Werth may have had a chance for an inside-the-park homer, but he trotted slowly to first before turning it on and settling for a triple after the wind kept the ball in the park.

Joe Beimel came in to face Ibanez, who singled in another run to make it 5-0.

That was plenty of support for Lee, who made sure everyone has to wait another day to see if Brad Lidge gets the chance to be Philadelphia's closer.

Just two years ago, Lee watched from the bench as the Cleveland Indians reached the ALCS. He was left off the postseason roster after a



Philadelphia Phillies starting pitcher Cliff Lee throws to a Colorado Rockies batter during the first inning of Game 1 of the National League division baseball series, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

poor season in which he was demoted to the minors and relegated to the bullpen.

But he went 22-3 last year and was shipped to Philadelphia on July 29 when the cost-cutting Indians purged their roster.

Jimenez showed off his blazing fastball early. He reached 100 mph against the second batter, Shane Victorino. The 25-year-old right-hander didn't wait long to mix speeds, either. He

froze Howard with an 80 mph curve ball for a called third strike in the second. He got Utley on the exact pitch in the fourth.

The Phillies have been on cruise control for a while, waiting to start the postseason and have a chance to be the first repeat champions since the New York Yankees won three World Series in a row from 1998-2000. Though they

didn't clinch their third straight NL East title until the final week, it was never in doubt. Philadelphia moved into first place for good on May 30, and had a comfortable lead the rest of the way.

Colorado rebounded from an awful start and finished a franchise-best 92-70, including 74-42 after Jim Tracy replaced Clint Hurdle as manager on May 29. □

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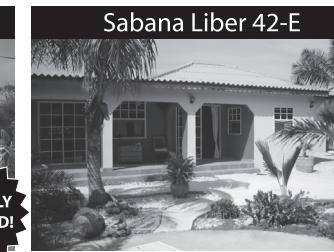
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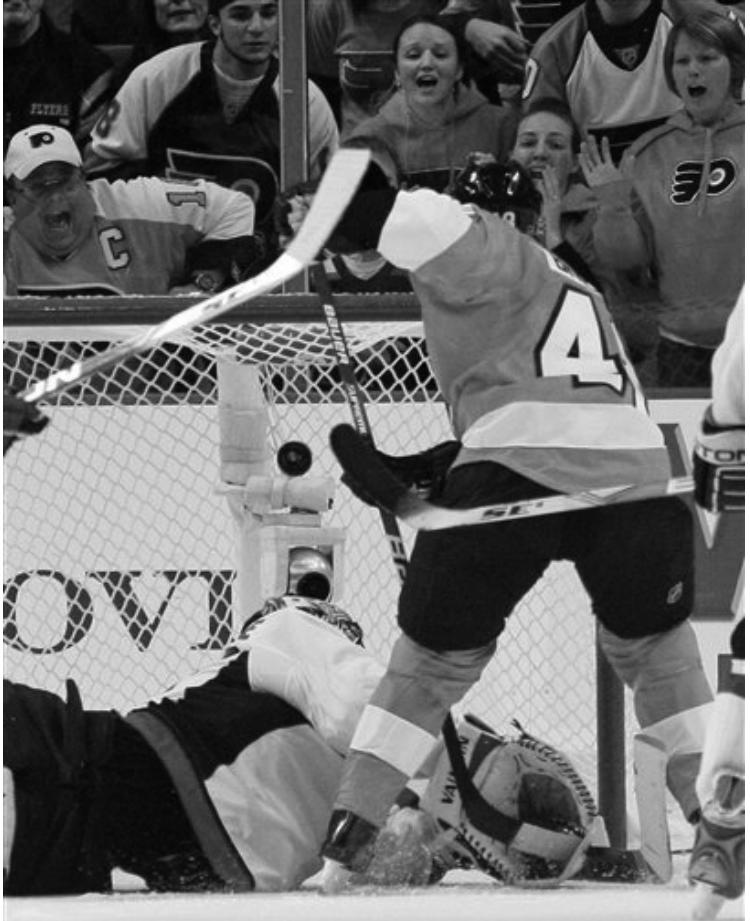
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NHL Roundup**Briere scores in OT, Richards has hat trick**

Philadelphia Flyers forward Danny Briere, right, scores against Washington Capitals goalie Jose Theodore in overtime of an NHL hockey game Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2009, in Philadelphia. Philadelphia won 6-5.

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Danny Briere pounced on a loose puck and knocked in the rebound at 3:52 of overtime to keep the Philadelphia Flyers perfect and lift them to a 6-5 win over the Washington Capitals on Tuesday.

Mike Richards bested Alex Ovechkin with his second career hat trick to help the Flyers improve to 3-0 for the first time since the 1998-99 season. Ovechkin scored twice and has five goals already on the season.

Alexander Semin scored twice for the Capitals. Matt Carle had four assists for the Flyers.

Hurricanes 2, Lightning 1

At Raleigh, North Carolina, Tuomo Ruutu scored the final goal for Carolina in a shootout to give the Hurricanes a victory over

Tampa Bay.

Sergei Samsonov began the shootout by beating Tampa Bay goalie Mike Smith, wrapping the puck around him left to right, before Cam Ward stopped the Lightning's Martin St. Louis. Smith then stopped Jussi Jokinen, and after Vincent Lecavalier hit the right post the left-shooting Ruutu beat Smith stick side. Jokinen got the regulation goal for Carolina while Ryan Malone scored for Tampa Bay, both on the power play.

Senators 2, Maple Leafs 1

At Toronto, Daniel Alfredsson's second-period goal from a penalty shot gave Ottawa a victory over Toronto. The Senators captain used a nifty backhand deke move against Swedish countryman Jonas Gustavsson to help lift his team to its first victory of the young season. Shean Donovan had the other goal for Ottawa (1-1-0).

In other NHL games it was, Ottawa 2, Toronto 1; Philadelphia 6, Washington 5, OT; Carolina 2, Tampa Bay 1, SO; Minnesota 4, Anaheim 3, OT; Calgary 4, Montreal 3; Edmonton 5, Dallas 4, SO; and Los Angeles 6, San Jose 4. □

YANKEES

Continued from Page B10

Rodriguez had gone 0 for 29 in the postseason with runners on base dating to Game 4 of the 2004 AL championship series before chasing Duensing with an RBI single that made it 4-2 in the fifth.

On a night with sustained winds blowing to right-center at 20 mph, with gusts up to 43 mph, Hideki Matsui followed with a two-run homer into Monument Park on left-hander Francisco Lirano's fourth pitch. The Yankees celebrated like kids, just as the Twins did when they beat Detroit in an AL Central tiebreaker at the Metrodome on Tuesday night. New York went on to win its first playoff game since Joe Girardi replaced Joe Torre as manager after the 2007

season.

Rodriguez added another run-scoring single in the seventh against Jon Rauch following an error by first baseman Michael Cuddyer, with A-Rod's drive hitting halfway up the right-field wall.

Minnesota didn't arrive to its hotel until nearly 4 a.m. and appeared to lack the energy that propelled the Twins during a 17-4 finish, which overcame a seven-game division deficit. The teams get a day off before resuming Friday night, when A.J. Burnett pitches for the Yankees against Nick Blackburn. New York will be trying to get off to its first 2-0 postseason start since 1999 against Texas. Casey Stengel hit the first postseason home run across the street at original Yankee Stadium, an inside-the-parker that gave the New York Giants a 5-4 win in the 1923 World Series opener.

It was Jeter, naturally, who hit the first home run in the Yankees' \$1.5 billion palace, where New York was a major league-best 57-24 at home during the regular season. The captain also got New York's first hit, was on base four times with two hits and two walks, and scored three runs. New York won all seven games against the Twins during the season, and was 23-3 at home against Minnesota during the regular season from 2002 on, but the Yankees had split four home games against Minnesota in the playoffs in 2003 and 2004. □

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Kuznetsova wins at China Open, Sharapova loses

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN

Associated Press Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Maria Sharapova was eliminated from the China Open on Wednesday, losing to Peng Shuai of China 6-2, 6-4, and Svetlana Kuznetsova moved into the quarterfinals by beating Alona Bondarenko of Ukraine 6-3, 4-6, 6-0.

Peng broke Sharapova twice in the first set, and then again in the sixth game of the second as the former top-ranked Russian appeared to show the strain of her three-set comeback victory over Victoria Azarenka of Belarus the night before.

"I've had matches where I didn't feel like I was maybe at the level that I wanted to be but I was able to fight through that and get through it, and today was just not one of those days, unfortunately," Sharapova said.

Sharapova did save two match points at 5-4 before losing.

The sixth-seeded Kuznetsova outplayed Bondarenko for much of the match and next faces Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova of Russia, who defeated Aleksandra Wozniak of Canada 6-4, 6-4.

Also, fourth-seeded Elena Dementieva of Russia beat Li Na of China 6-2, 6-0.

Nikolay Davydenko of



Russia's Maria Sharapova leaves the court after losing to Peng Shuai of China at the second round of China Open tennis tournament in Beijing, China, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2009. Peng defeated Sharapova 6-2, 6-4.

Associated Press

Russia advanced in the men's field, easily beating Philipp Kohlschreiber 6-1, 6-0. Davydenko will next face Marin Cilic of Croatia, who beat Julien Benneteau of France 6-2, 2-6, 6-0.

Second-seeded Novak Djokovic trounced Viktor Troicki 6-3, 6-0 in an all-Serbian match, while Fernando Verdasco defeated Juan Carlos Ferrero 7-5, 6-4 in an all-Spanish encounter. "Overall performance was very good," said Djokovic, who next faces Verdasco. "I was very patient with my shots and got a lot of returns back and made him make a lot of errors." □

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ONU cuestiona magistrados electos por Congreso en Guatemala

GUATEMALA (AP) - Una comisión auspiciada por las Naciones Unidas para combatir la impunidad en Guatemala expuso públicamente el martes una serie de pruebas y argumentos que ponen en duda la "honorabilidad" de seis de los 13 magistrados a la Corte Suprema de Justicia electos la semana pasada por el Congreso.

"Espero que la elección sea rectificada", dijo el jefe de la Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (CICIG), el jurista español Carlos Castresana, en una rueda de prensa.

Castresana presentó un informe que evidencia, según su criterio, la falta de "honorabilidad" de los futuros jueces de la alta magistratura. Tras la elección, la Corte de Constitucionalidad ordenó al Legislativo revisar si los magistrados recién electos cumplen con el requisito de tener "reconocida honorabilidad" contemplado en la Constitución.

"No hay un procedimiento establecido para esto, cada diputado estudia las objeciones planteadas y lo discutirán en las bancadas. Luego buscaremos un procedimiento para, no sé como llamarlo, revocar o revertir, o alguna otra forma de eliminar la elección si fuera el caso", dijo a la AP el presidente del Congreso, Roberto Alejos.

El Legislativo tiene hasta el 13 de octubre para realizar el trámite, ya que en esa fecha ha dejuramentarse la nueva corte. La selección de magistrados comenzó con la conformación de una comisión postuladora de 54 integrantes integrada por representantes de los poderes del Estado, las universidades, los colegios profesionales y otras entidades de peso en el país. Estos 54 se dividieron en equipos de tres para evaluar la documentación presentada por más de 250 aspirantes a una magistratura.

Tras un proceso de depuración, los postuladores



Carlos Castresana, jefe de la Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en Guatemala (CICIG), habla durante una conferencia de prensa en la ciudad de Guatemala, el martes 6 de octubre de 2009.

seleccionaron 26 candidatos, supuestamente idóneos, para que el Congreso eligiera a los 13 futuros integrantes de la Corte Suprema. Antes de que se votara para seleccionar a los 13, la CICIG dijo que al menos ocho de los aspirantes tenían tachas en su desempeño profesional o vínculos con sectores de interés.

De los seis magistrados cuestionados el martes por el jefe de la CICIG, cuatro fueron electos por una terna postuladora integrada por dos letrados vinculados con Sergio Roberto López Villatoro, de quien la CICIG investiga vínculos con grupos mafiosos.

Castresana informó que López Villatoro, protagonista de un escándalo de contrabando de calzado deportivo publicado por la prensa local, patrocinó maestrías en una universidad española a 32 juristas guatemaltecos a razón de casi 1.600 euros (unos 2.350 dólares) por persona. Entre los 54 integrantes de la comisión postuladora había 26 de los "becados" por el empresario guatemalteco.

"Desde hace varios años está cooptando magistrados de diversos ordenes jurisdiccionales y jerarquías con el propósito de controlar directa o indirectamente tanto

las cortes de apelaciones como la Corte Suprema", dijo Castresana al referirse a López Villatoro.

Además dijo que este empresario tiene vínculos con partidos políticos y despachos de notarios que adelantan procesos de adopciones internacionales _una actividad plagada de irregularidades hasta que hace unos meses el país emitió

una nueva normativa para detener el creciente flujo de niños guatemaltecos enviados al exterior_, así como otros de abogados defensores de narcotraficantes y de militares acusados de violaciones a los derechos humanos.

Castresana mencionó que la junta disciplinaria del Organismo Judicial nunca resolvió una queja presentada

contra una jueza que está entre los seleccionados para integrar la futura Corte Suprema y a quien se señaló de haber absuelto a un acusado de asesinato a cambio de dinero. Además es propietaria de empresas que reciben contratos del estado.

Otro de los 13 electos es padre del gobernador del departamento de Guatemala y candidato a diputado del partido oficial en el 2007. Otra más, fungiendo como jueza ha fallado consistentemente en favor de ex funcionarios acusados de corrupción o violaciones a los derechos humanos. Los otros dos, aun cuando eran miembros de la directiva de la universidad estatal, ejerciendo como jueces conocieron un caso de esa casa de estudios y fallaron a favor de ésta.

"La ley de postulaciones nos permitió conocer todo esto, cosas que la vez pasada nadie se dio cuenta", dijo Castresana, al referirse a las garantías de transparencia contenidas en el procedimiento adoptado para la selección de magistrados en el actual proceso. □

Dominicana y FMI firman carta de intención

SANTO DOMINGO (AP) - República Dominicana y el Fondo Monetario Internacional (FMI) firmaron una carta de intención para un acuerdo "stand by" por 1.700 millones de dólares y una duración de 28 meses.

El director gerente del FMI, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, en un documento dado a conocer en su portal de Internet, informó que el acuerdo con las autoridades dominicanas se firmó el martes en Estambul, Turquía.

Tras el convenio, la nación caribeña tendrá acceso inmediato a 990 millones de dólares, facilitados por el Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID), el Banco Mundial y del propio FMI. "Aplaudimos a las autoridades por el sólido programa de políticas, que demuestra el compromiso de fortificar el marco institucional y la economía de República Dominicana", dijo Strauss-Kahn en el comunicado.

El funcionario del FMI informó que este nuevo acuerdo stand-by con el FMI contempla restaurar el ritmo del crecimiento del PIB

real, reducir aún más la inflación, disminuir gradualmente el déficit de cuenta corriente de la balanza de pagos, y un aumento gradual del superávit primario del sector público consolidado.

El gobierno confronta dificultades en lograr las metas de sus ingresos fiscales, además de que la economía local sufrió durante el año reducción en la captación de recursos externos fruto de la crisis global.

La carta expone un programa de compromisos de política encaminados a ayudar a la economía dominicana a recuperarse de los efectos de la crisis financiera mundial y a sentar bases sólidas para el crecimiento sostenible y la estabilidad macroeconómica. El ejecutivo del FMI reveló que el gobierno dominicano se comprometió a cerrar con un déficit primario del sector público combinado de 0.8% del Productor Interno Bruto este año, que se reduciría a cero en 2010 y se transformaría paulatinamente en un superávit de 2% del PIB en 2012. □



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